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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 19 April 2007

Jeudi 19 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 19 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 19 avril 2007

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

JOSEPH BRANT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Ballot item number 79, private member's notice of motion number 57, Mrs. Savoline.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, could I ask for unanimous consent to suspend the House until the arrival of the member for Burlington and whatever time is lost be taken from the opposition's speaking time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands in recess until the arrival of the member for Burlington.

The House suspended proceedings from 1003 to 1011.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately identify Burlington's Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital for inclusion on the ministry's capital projects priorities list; and the McGuinty government should then release to the proud people of Burlington the \$40 million needed for the Joseph Brant hospital renewal project.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Burlington has moved private member's notice of motion number 57. I recognize the member for Burlington for her presentation.

Mrs. Savoline: The Joseph Brant hospital takes great pride in the leadership role it plays in the delivery of health care to the people of Burlington and to the region around Burlington. It strives to fulfill this vision by making Burlington and the surrounding areas a strong and healthy community.

Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital opened in 1961. At that time, it was a 228-bed facility. There was some expansion in 1971, when two wings were added that nearly doubled the capacity of the hospital. Since then, however, there has been no expansion and very little upgrading.

The design is inefficient and outdated. The operating rooms were designed over 50 years ago. Very little

equipment was needed when those operating rooms were designed. In today's modern medicine, the equipment is larger—for example, there are lasers and operating microscopes—and the infrastructure does not meet modern digital networking and air-handling requirements for contemporary operating rooms. There are other deficiencies in the hospital as well, in the post-anaesthetic care unit, the intensive care unit and the patient care areas, which I will tell you a little bit more about right now.

The equipment used in day-to-day patient care is significantly larger as well. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was acceptable. But now, to navigate through the narrow halls and doorways, with the modern medicine we're moving toward, it doesn't cut the mustard.

We have moved to single-use supplies rather than re-using items, and that's a good thing to do—I think that's a great thing to do. But this has created the need for significantly more storage space—much more storage space. The narrow halls are not acceptable to the fire marshal for storage of supplies, so he has asked that the corridors be cleared. What this does is add to the inefficiency of how the hospital and the staff do their work. It forces staff to travel considerably long distances to get the items they need that they've had to put in storage.

I think that a considerable investment is due and appropriate at this point in time, to continue the good history of service of the Joseph Brant into the 21st century. We'd like to build for the future, and there is a plan that would be phased over 10 years; it's a \$150-million plan. However, the first phase of that plan is just over \$40 million. Joseph Brant hospital is now planning for that first phase. It's the creation of a new three-storey wing on the southwest corner of the current facility. The components would be 11 new operating rooms for the first phase. It would have the ability to free up existing operating rooms for specific types of surgeries such as knee and hip replacements and cataract surgeries. These are the kinds of surgeries that the ministry has put on its priority list.

A new intensive care unit in that hospital would provide more space and dedicated isolation rooms for patients with infectious diseases. We only have to remember back to our SARS experience to know how important properly isolated rooms are in a hospital when those kinds of pandemics or epidemics occur.

The new facility would tremendously benefit our residents in Burlington and around Burlington. It's more than just a convenience; it's a ready access that could save lives and provide urgent immediate care for our patients.

The long waiting lists that all hospitals in Ontario are suffering also occur at Joseph Brant hospital. We need

new facilities. It's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when. For the last three and a half years, there has been a proposal at the Ministry of Health for the first phase of this expansion with very little movement within the ministry staff for any response to our hospital. By coincidence, there was some response at the end of February as a result of the by-election and, I guess, the publicity that the hospital received then. So the hospital did receive \$1.5 million to do some planning work. But that planning work will go for naught unless this hospital sees its place on a priority projects list and they understand when it can be built.

We recently received \$2 million for an MRI scanner. It's great. Nobody is saying, "No, thank you," to things like this. But, Minister, unless you have the space to accommodate this new equipment in order to reduce waiting times, this equipment is not going to be used to its full extent. I don't think the people of Burlington or the people of Ontario feel that that is an appropriate way to do business.

There is no physical space. They need to expand in order to reduce wait times, and the demand for additional diagnostic imaging tests, such as CT and MRI scans, is increasing—it's increasing all over Ontario. Unless the hospital is expanded, we can't make dents in these wait times. So we're asking for this proposal to go forward.

In the greater Toronto area there is growth. I think the major growth in Ontario is increasing in our area. The gap between funding in the greater Toronto area and the rest of the province is also increasing. Joseph Brant hospital is not the least of those waiting for that gap to be reduced.

The government is well aware of the pressures that our hospital and other hospitals are having. It's noted in many statements made by doctors' associations and by actual studies the ministry has embarked on. Unfortunately, when these studies come forward, the minister dismisses them as being "not totally representative of what is really going on." So there is a dismissal of good information that's been asked for, provided and not acted on. I think that's irresponsible.

1020

That goes back to March 2005, when the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, in a submission to the provincial working group of the minister, George Smitherman, examined emergency response times. They told the province that the primary cause of emergency department overcrowding is the lack of beds in hospital wards and intensive care units. So there's a domino effect. Our hospitals are crammed with people who should be in long-term-care facilities, but they can't be dismissed, discharged from the hospital, because there are no long-term-care beds available to them. So the medical beds in hospitals are then taken up with people who should really not be there.

I think this is most unfortunate because the last budget that we saw just a few weeks ago did not make a dent in this problem. The long-term-care folks who were so eagerly waiting for an answer from the ministry, for

answers to their issues—it did not happen in that budget. There was certainly nothing in there for hospitals like Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital to be able to move forward into the new millennium and to be able to treat people medically in a way that we in North America deserve and pay for in our \$2.5-billion health tax.

The people of Burlington felt that when the \$2.5-billion health tax came in, perhaps that would be a solution to our Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital problems with expansion. But the \$2.5 billion, ladies and gentlemen, has come and gone. The people of Burlington have contributed \$105 million to the McGuinty health tax, and we have received little back for it. In fact, in that same time period, 60 beds have been closed in our hospital. That's the answer we've had to the \$105 million that we've contributed. I think it's time that this government stood up and took notice and used the health care money for what it was collected for.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): It's my pleasure to speak to this motion from my colleague from Burlington. It gives me an opportunity to, among other things, speak about medicare and the joys of medicare and what we're facing right now in the province of Ontario, which is, I hope, not the potential death of medicare.

It was 60 years ago, in 1947, that Tommy Douglas—who was voted by listeners in a CBC poll as being Canada's greatest Canadian because he's the father of medicare—first introduced, in Saskatchewan, public health insurance programs. What's interesting about that is that he did it in the face of opposition. Later, in 1962, he extended that program to include hospitals as well, again in the face of amazing opposition, really, looking back historically at it, from business, from doctors, from just about everyone else from the other political parties, yet he still made a go of it and, interestingly enough, balanced budgets at the same time. Tommy balanced budgets in Saskatchewan while still introducing this comprehensive plan that looked after the health care of, in those days, those who lived in Saskatchewan, now of course extending across the country.

If there's anything that marks us as Canadians that we're proud of across the political spectrum, I believe it is our publicly funded and public health care program. I know that our intern, Thad Chastain from Ohio, is amazed at the unanimity of Canadians on this topic—that we're proud of health care, that we're happy that we live with a system of medicare and that although we might want to add to it or subtract from it, you're not ever going to see somebody here running against it. So I want to note that.

Then I want to go on and talk about some of the problems that we're facing and that medicare is facing in Ontario. Frank Dobson, who is a British MP and also was the Minister of Health in Great Britain, was here not too long ago—just last week, in fact—touring around Ontario talking about the dangers of Ontario following in Britain's footsteps, and that is going down the road of

privatization. Even the *Economist*, which hardly can be accused of being a left-wing publication, has now come out and declared the British private-public system an unmitigated failure. So the jury is definitely in on the British experiment with their own medicare system, and we have some examples already now of so-called private-public-funded hospitals and the disaster they may very well present to the public as well.

I'm reading here about a town hall meeting the Ontario Health Coalition had in Brampton. It says here, taking it out of the meeting:

"As the Brampton hospital P3 nears completion, it is evident that not only did capital costs almost double from \$350 million to \$550 million, but the hospital has been cut almost in half. Bottom line? At almost double the cost, the new hospital will open with 350 instead of the announced 608 beds. The local coalition is calling a meeting to update the community with new information and discuss what can be done to hold those responsible to account for this hospital P3 boondoggle."

For anybody interested, that's going to be on May 9. Of course, we've heard in this House about the disaster that is the North Bay situation, again over budget. I used to be in business. I know that businesses do not invest in anything if they don't hope to get a profit out of what they invest in, and certainly the profit will come at the expense of patient care.

I heard the member from Burlington talk about long-term care. Certainly we've got some serious problems with long-term care in this province as well; again, chipping away at what should be a solid medicare system. We've been saying—the New Democratic Party and others, the Ontario Health Coalition, and of course those who have to work in long-term-care facilities, including many in my own riding—that they need more funding, that they need more staff, that they need at least a minimum average of 3.5 hours per patient per day. In this government's long-term-care bill they do not get that. In fact, those who are in our long-term-care facilities get about \$5.46 a day for food—imagine feeding someone on that—as contrasted with prisoners, who get about \$10. So that's the situation in our long-term-care facilities. I've delivered many petitions—so have others in this House—about that totally appalling and shameful situation.

Here is something in the *Globe* from another group, Cancer Care Ontario, who have presented something again. Here's another arrow into the heart of medicare:

"A proposal that would allow Ontario cancer patients to pay for unfunded, intravenous drugs in public hospitals is 'the answer for only a select few' and will leave a majority of patients without the care they need, a cancer advocacy group says.

"The plan put forward by Cancer Care Ontario—the arm's-length agency that advises the province on all aspects of provincial cancer care—sets the stage for a two-tier medicine system in a province where it should be 'based on equal access for all citizens, regardless of income,' the Cancer Advocacy Coalition of Canada says."

That's another group that is upset at this attack upon our medicare system—again, something held near and dear to all Canadians and certainly all in Ontario, I would hope.

Another interesting article here that's a little bit more recent is by Carol Goar, *Toronto Star*, and she's talking about home care. If you can't find a bed in long-term care and you're on a waiting list for a hospital bed, is there any chance that you'll have some of that same health care at home? Unfortunately not. She points out here: "What can be said with assurance is that unpaid caregivers (mostly women) are still struggling, home care services are still spotty and, according to unofficial estimates, just four cents out of every public health dollar goes into home care." So home care is not an alternative either to the waits for hospital beds and to the wait for a bed in long-term care as well.

It's interesting too that under the guise of the wait time strategy, another privatization move is happening. Again I read from the Ontario Health Coalition:

"The government is converting hospital budgets from global budgets to a wholesale plan to move towards payments for procedures—a market-style pricing system. They have begun to introduce price-based competition for services. In addition, they are moving specific treatments into regional specialist centres (starting with cataracts, hips and knees). Finally, the wait times strategy is focused on a narrow set of specialists' procedures following those set nationally: cataracts, cancer, cardiac, hips and knees, and MRIs and CTs.

"It is ironic that after years of trying to move physicians away from fee-for-service medicine, the government"—and by "government," they mean the government of Dalton McGuinty's Liberals—"is now moving hospitals towards this model."

1030

Shameful, really; absolutely shameful: another arrow at the heart of medicare in this province in a way that even the Harris-Eves government couldn't have foreseen.

It's interesting that those who are in the field—doctors themselves; doctors like Dr. Robert Bell, president and CEO of University Health Network—have both glowing things to say about medicare and disparaging things to say about the way that medicare is being attacked in this province.

I read from an article here that he wrote, and this was in the *Toronto Star*. He says, "Although health care costs have increased in Canada over the past 10 years, these increases are comparable to other countries and largely driven by increasing drug charges and new technologies."

He goes on to say, "When we compare Canadian public health insurance to private health insurance costs borne by American industry, it is obvious that tight public control of health care budgets offers a competitive advantage"—and this is an interesting point—"for businesses locating in this country.

"Consider the staggering health care cost faced by General Motors. In 2005, the auto giant's health insur-

ance bill totalled more than \$5.3 billion for its 1.1 million US employees, retirees and their dependants. This is at least 50% more than the cost of publicly funded care in Canada."

He concludes by saying, "Access to health care based on need rather than ability to pay is an important defining characteristic of this country's social policy that should be protected rather than deserted."

He goes on to talk about the problem with wait times and fee for service that's again creeping into what we have seen as a public health care system. This goes against what we think is common sense: that public care costs business less than private care. But we have a very good and a very bad example just south of the border of what could happen and what shouldn't happen. We have another example across the ocean in Great Britain of what they had and lost and what we are in the process here in Ontario of perhaps having and also losing.

There's phenomenal information on all of this, of course, but I think if you look at jurisdictional examples, it gives you a pretty good idea of what not to have. The Ontario Health Coalition says, "The introduction of what the British call the 'internal market' has doubled administrative costs."

In our own examples in Ontario—I cited two: Brampton and North Bay—of publicly-privately funded hospitals we see exactly this happening right before our very eyes. We are repeating, unfortunately, British history here, and that's what Frank Dobson came to warn us about just last week.

Of course, all of this is predicated on a broken promise, and that was Dalton McGuinty's broken promise in 2003 that none of this would happen, that privatization would not happen in health care, that medicare was front and centre for the Liberal Party and front and centre on its agenda.

Here I read from our own Murray Campbell of the *Globe and Mail*: "McGuinty's Forgotten Pledge" is the title of the article. He said, "Mr. McGuinty held firm, however. 'P3s represent an extraordinary departure from our history when it comes to public hospitals,'" and decried the P3s of the Harris-Eves days.

Then, of course, upon election, that promise was readily forgotten, and he is going down the road of P3s faster than Harris and Eves ever did. As Murray said, "And then, miraculously, the concept of P3s died, replaced by something called alternative financing and procurement." That's Orwellian-speak for P3 hospitals, and that's what's happening in our province right now.

It's a sad day across Ontario to see what is happening in medicare. It's a sad day to see hospitals starved for cash. Certainly this particular motion to see more cash go into a hospital in Burlington—and I know there's going to be another motion this morning calling for cash for yet another hospital, and hopefully I'll have a chance to speak to that as well, dealing with mothers and babies and putting their health at risk.

Certainly we want to see more money go to these hospitals. We want to see more money go into publicly

funded hospitals and publicly funded medicare. Why? Because it's safer, delivers a better quality of health care, and it's cheaper. There are absolutely no reasons not to fully fund our public medicare system—absolutely none. Unfortunately, due to one-can-only-wonder-what pressures, we're going down that road.

I'd like to conclude where I started with an homage to Tommy Douglas, the father of medicare, 60 years ago today. It's interesting that in that same year, 1947, he also brought in Canada's first bill of rights. We were talking about charter rights recently—well, this set the stage for charter rights a lot earlier than the federal government ever moved on that. So a bill of rights, the first publicly funded health care system and a provincial budget that didn't go into the red: all of those possible but only possible where you have a fully funded, public medicare system.

I'm happy to support this motion and I'm happy to support the motion after it. I'd like to see a motion calling for full funding for all of our health care without corporate sponsorship, without selling off our health care facilities to private interests.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure to join the debate this morning. I will say right from the start that it's good to finally see a Conservative standing up for a hospital in Burlington. That's about the best thing I can say about this motion and the only positive thing I can say about this motion we see before us this morning.

What needs to be explained is: How is this funding going to be given to all these hospitals while the leader of the official opposition has confirmed on a number of occasions that he wants to cut—not add—\$2.5 billion from the health care system in this province and build hospitals at the same time? This isn't making a whole lot of sense.

This morning was a little ironic, I think, because the Progressive Conservatives in Burlington are a little late to this argument on Joe Brant funding. If it hadn't been for Joan Loughheed in the last by-election raising the issue—Joan is a former Tory and makes no bones about it. Joan used to belong to the Progressive Conservative Party and decided, after years and years of that hospital being ignored by that party—she felt so strongly about it she was prepared to change allegiances because she saw what was happening around this province. She saw how our party was beginning to get its hands around this problem that we'd been left with.

What had we been left with? The Ontario Hospital Association, a non-partisan organization that gives us information on the state of hospitals, estimated that when we took over there was an \$8-billion hospital deficit in this province that had been left by the Conservative government. When Joe Brant decided that it needed to go ahead, where did it look to get support? Did it look to its own member in Burlington? Perhaps they did. I'll tell you, though, I was at a meeting with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the member from Stoney Creek and the mayor of Burlington at the time, Rob MacIsaac. I was at another meeting with the member

from Flamborough–Dundas–Aldershot–Ancaster, asking for the same thing.

I'm the member for Oakville. I'm fighting for a hospital in my own community. The member from Stoney Creek and the member from Flamborough and other places are fighting for health in their own community. Who was fighting for the people of Burlington when they needed it most? Not Conservatives. Three Liberals had to go to bat to try and get the funding for this hospital. When Joan Lougheed decided she was going to be our candidate, she made sure that this was going to be the issue. While Halton region grew in size and while folks like Oakvillegreen and other people came forward to the region and said, "It's okay to grow like this. What are you doing about the infrastructure deficit? What are you doing about the hospitals? What are you doing about the schools? What are you doing about the greenbelt? What are you doing about the loss of green lands?" they were all but ignored. The growth was allowed to take place. Thankfully, in Oakville we've seen a change. We've got a new council in Oakville that understands that if you're going to grow in population, you need to plan for it.

1040

What have the Conservatives done to Joseph Brant hospital? You would think from listening this morning they had done all sorts of wonderful things. The Tories cut—not added, cut—\$3.3 million from that hospital. They cut acute care beds across this province by 22%. I don't think the previous member enjoyed that good a relationship with the hospital board, as I understand it. It's really none of my business, but I get the feeling that it wasn't the friendliest of relationships. The Conservatives closed 28 hospitals across this province, and now they bring forward a motion like this today as if during their time in office they had done just a wonderful job. We are delivering new hospitals. We're building new hospitals across the province. When the Conservatives were in power, they closed hospitals. People don't forget that.

This is a wonderful plan put forward by Joe Brant hospital. It's a plan I support. They've been given the funding from the Ministry of Health to move ahead with that plan. They're competing with other projects, obviously, all around the province. Since we've been in power, new funding that has gone to Joe Brant hospital is in the order of \$25 million—not closing hospitals; adding \$25 million to the budget. Thirty-nine new nurses have been hired at Joe Brant hospital since 2003.

We have a lot to be proud of in Ontario. I'll put the record of the McGuinty government and Liberals, when it comes to health care in this province, against the mess that was left behind by the Harris-Eves years that did nothing for the people of Burlington.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm very honoured today to rise to speak to my colleague from Burlington's first private member's resolution, but I also have to say I find it disappointing that tabling this resolution is even necessary. The fact of the matter is, I can't help but draw a parallel between my colleague and

myself. Like her, I was elected in a by-election in a 905 region outside Toronto, and also like her, funding for health care was the number one concern that I heard about as I went door to door in the by-election in March 2006.

As a result of this overwhelming concern, I made a commitment to the people of Whitby–Ajax, whom I represent, that I would make their voices heard in this Legislature on health care issues, and I honoured that commitment by tabling a private member's bill almost exactly a year ago that's quite similar to the one that was brought forward by my colleague today. I called on this government to immediately increase health care funding in Durham region to the provincial average and thereafter to develop and implement health care funding in Durham region based on population growth.

Taxpayer money from Durham and Halton represents 5% and 4% respectively of the total premium revenue generated by Dalton McGuinty's regressive health tax, yet there exists a \$740-million funding gap between what is made available for the GTA and 905 regions and what is provided to the rest of Ontario. That is simply not fair. Halton, Durham, York and Peel represent 25% of the population of Ontario, yet calls to equalize the massive funding gap that exists in our communities have repeatedly been ignored by this government. And not only that, we have recently heard specifically in my riding that Lakeridge Health Corp. has been directed by this government to cut almost \$3 million in children's mental health services, adult mental health services and addiction services, and this has had a devastating impact on our community, I can tell you.

All we hear from this government are self-congratulatory announcements such as the minister's continued claims to have reduced wait times for various procedures, including cancer surgery, hip and knee replacements and angioplasties, but we also know, thanks to the Provincial Auditor's report, that these numbers need to be taken with "a grain of salt," and I believe that was an exact quote.

We also hear from this government that they are committed to prioritizing access to health care services at home, yet in the GTA-905 area, our residents are continually forced to travel extensively outside of our region in order to receive the necessary services.

I say to this government that it's time to stop talking and start acting on this matter. Residents in the GTA-905 regions are sick of hearing about these laudatory announcements regarding your supposed commitment to health care as they wait desperately for funding for health care services, and especially for hospitals such as Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington—and the need for a new full-service hospital in my own community of Whitby.

The McGuinty government decided to use their majority to defeat my resolution, a result that was very disappointing to my constituents. I would therefore like to use this opportunity to urge the government members to listen to the concerns that are being voiced through the

member from Burlington today, to listen to what we're saying and to renew the commitment to rebuild the hospitals in these communities and to grant the money that is so desperately needed for the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital and for many other regions, including my own, Durham region.

The fact of the matter is that this issue is the number one concern of millions of Ontarians, and this concern is not going to go away. So I would urge the government members to listen to what is being said today and to support this motion accordingly.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): And all those other places, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak, notwithstanding a failing voice, to this particular resolution. I want to say at the outset that Joseph Brant hospital has an amazing history. It is one of the finest hospitals in the province. Mr. Scott and his entire team down there work exceedingly hard, often under trying circumstances, to deliver the kind of health care system that the good people in Burlington and every other community in this great province deserve. I want to begin by applauding their efforts and the efforts of the staff there who work so hard every single day to care for our people.

I happen to live in a community known as Waterdown, just north of Burlington. About 8% of the people of Waterdown routinely use Joseph Brant hospital as the hospital of choice. I even have a spouse who's a family physician who's been known to deliver the odd child at Joseph Brant, a wonderful facility for those purposes as well. I want to begin by saying that.

I also want to say just in passing that I was a very good friend of Tommy Douglas's. We spent time together talking about health care. We'll never know for sure, but I think if Tommy were here today, he would be quite prepared to stand in whatever place he is and praise at least the direction of this government in terms of trying to deal with the infrastructure shortfall and meet the needs of people. Tommy always understood that there was a need for a balance between the private and the public sectors in terms of delivering health care. Even in Saskatchewan, he understood that. If you read some of his speeches from the House of Commons, you'll learn some important lessons there.

I want to just, in speaking directly to the motion, make a couple of observations. First of all, I understand the honourable member opposite wanting to stand up for her community. Any decent MPP worth his or her salt would be knee-jerk in support of their community, and so I applaud her for that. I do need to point out, however, that governments don't release \$40 million to the proud people of any community without there being a plan. I think the member opposite said, "And this \$1.5 million in planning money will go for naught if we don't get the \$40 million." Well, when the \$1.5 million to do the study was announced, there was absolute and overwhelming

rejoicing in the Burlington community, particularly in the hospital community, that we were finally getting on with it, that a government was in place that finally understand and was prepared to move forward. They understood. They made the leap of understanding that when you fund and undertake to fund planning a major capital project, particularly in the spirit that this new government entered into that discussion, that carries with it an understanding that if that plan, all things being equal, can be sustained in terms of showing a clear need, the government will come to the table with the funding. They understood that, and I think that will be the case. So the hospital sector is an important sector.

The member opposite also spoke about bed warmers, the people who should be in long-term-care facilities. I think that's an important issue too. This government through the LHIN system and other initiatives, is trying very hard to direct increasingly more monies into the community sector. One of the ways to do that, obviously, is to get on with home care and long-term care, which is another priority we have.

I'm pleased to speak. We'll see how this resolution goes. But let's be real about it, not silly. You don't just write a cheque for \$40 million without the plan being in place first. That, in fact, would be irresponsible. Even Tommy Douglas would understand that.

1050

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate today, the resolution put forward by the member for Burlington which states that "the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately identify Burlington's Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital for inclusion on the ministry's capital projects priorities list," and, of course, release the \$40 million needed for the Joseph Brant hospital renewal project.

I want to congratulate the member from Burlington. This is her first private member's bill; yesterday she had her maiden speech. She has come into this Legislature with a wealth of experience. She is a highly respected individual who has served as a city and a regional councillor and as Halton chair. She has long taken a passionate interest in what is needed for the people in Burlington.

Unfortunately, in this case we have a hospital, Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, that has a desperate need for renewal. We've heard about the operating rooms that are about 50 years old, and we all know that, with the new designs, they simply don't meet the needs of today with the new technology. We have an outdated facility, a facility that is not keeping up with the tremendous growth that we're seeing in the Burlington community, and that growth includes a lot of seniors, who also need increased care.

Since she has been involved in other levels of government—municipal and regional—she has been a strong advocate for the hospital. She continues to be a strong advocate for the hospital. I support her in this request. For three and a half years there has been a proposal on the desk of the minister of this Liberal government.

There has been no response to put this hospital on the priority list, despite the fact that if you don't deal with this inefficient, outdated structure, you simply are not going to provide the needed medical services that the people in the Burlington community deserve today.

It's impossible to reduce your wait times and it's impossible to decrease the emergency room response times unless you get moving on a plan for capital renewal. The plan is desperately needed. This government talks about improving health services, but I would say to you that we see little in the way of improvement. In fact, if you asked people today, they would probably tell you they're not sure where the health tax went. Yet the people of Burlington have paid more than \$100 million into the health tax with nothing whatsoever to show for it.

I would strongly urge this government to recognize the needs of the people in the Burlington community, as the member for Burlington has done. I would encourage them to support this resolution today and make sure that Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital is put on the ministry's capital projects priorities list. The people of Burlington deserve no less.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion. When I started out and I read it, I was very clear about some of the things I wanted to say. But when you listen to the debate in here, you go, "Gee, do I speak to this very deserving motion put forward by this member or do I try to unwind some of the weird spinning of tales that has been going on since she put forward her motion today?" But let's start with the importance of this motion.

Private members' time in the Legislature is probably one of the most valuable times for members because they get an opportunity to speak from the heart about the things that are very important to them, to the members of their community, to their ridings and their constituents. There isn't a person in here who doesn't know that probably the most important thing to the people of Burlington is Joe Brant hospital, and I know that—as was already alluded to by my colleague the member from Oakville—because I spent time touring that hospital.

I know exactly the things first-hand that you spoke of. I had a meeting with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal; the member from Oakville was there, our member from the place of many names was there as well; and we have been advocating strongly for this as well. I know how hard it is because I have a hospital in my community that I had to fight for. It was slated for closure under the previous government. A 7,000-member candlelight vigil—just people of the community—got together and saved that hospital. Then they started the campaign to rebuild it, because it was built in the 1940s initially and they've added pieces on here and there.

I fought very hard to get my hospital on the agenda to be rebuilt, because the backlog in this province is horrific. Hospitals weren't being rebuilt under the previous government; they were being closed. Now we have kept them open and we are rebuilding and we are moving forward.

The member opposite talked about the need to change that hospital because of all the new technologies. That old hospital can't house the new technologies. Then I hear from the member from the New Democratic Party saying, "Oh, in Tommy Douglas's time it was all fine. Why can't they do it that way?"

You know what? It costs a lot more to do some of the operations that are required now. Why should we pay somebody to do an eight-hour operation when it can take one hour with the new technologies that are available? If we can buy a machine—a laser hip surgery machine costs \$300,000—how many of those should we buy? How many of your tax dollars do you want us to spend on \$300,000 laser hip surgery machines? How many should we buy? We have to balance that new technology, which is very expensive, and make sure that we strategically place them around the province so that as many people as possible can have access to them. Then we have to have the personnel to man them, so that as many people as possible can access that new technology.

Laser eye surgery at St. Joseph's—the community health centre right in my riding—we actually funded two state-of-the-art rooms there. There was a state-of-the-art room sitting there that could do laser cataract surgery but it wasn't being funded. So we flowed the money to that place, not in the big expensive hospitals but into that community care location. People can go in in the morning, and they have trouble seeing. They come out at noon hour and they can see. That is the wise use of dollars.

This isn't Tommy Douglas's time. You don't break your leg and we put you in an ambulance and you go and get a cast on. Everybody wants that quintuple bypass if they need it, and they want it now. That costs money.

So we balance, and we analyze the costs of the new technologies and how we can strategically place them in this province and how we can strategically get as many people as possible manning those machines so that as many people as possible in this province can have access to the surgeries that they are demanding.

I won't listen anymore to all this tale-spinning that I hear all the time. I am sick of people being really just not quite straightforward. Yes, there's new information, but it must be accurate information. I want people to critically think when they hear things. Ask tough questions and make sure you're getting good information.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Savoline: It's disappointing to hear politics being played out in this chamber—talking about past members' performances and that kind of thing. I think that's disrespectful to the issue at hand, quite frankly.

The long waiting times that every community is suffering—even the member from Oakville knows that even though he has a new site for his new hospital, that hospital can't access money until 2013, long after the burgeoning waiting lists and the walls are expanding with the number of people who need services at the existing hospital.

Playing politics with these critical issues is not something that sits well with me. In fact, I've read this to

you before. On my opponent's website in the previous by-election, it said, "She can immediately start working from within government to get more beds and better services for Joseph Brant. As a Liberal MPP, she can deliver." What does that mean? That a member with any other political party stripe has no influence in this Liberal government? Shame.

Let me tell you that in 2003 McGuinty promised to unplug emergency rooms. In March 2005, the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians said that the lack of beds in hospital wards and intensive care units was a direct result of the overcrowding. ER physicians came to Queen's Park, and they said that Ontario's Ombudsman should investigate their complaints. The minister responded by saying that the coalition only represents 20% of the province's ER doctors.

The minister continues to dismiss people who bring good information forward to this chamber, and I encourage the members to vote for my resolution today.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for our first ballot item.

1100

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal government should provide Stevenson Memorial Hospital with the required \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years so that it can reopen its birthing unit and ensure that enough obstetricians and health care providers can be recruited to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in New Tecumseth, Adjala-Tosorontio and Essa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved private member's notice of motion number 55. I recognize the member for Simcoe-Grey for his presentation.

Mr. Wilson: I just want to apologize to my over 200 guests today. We're having a little difficulty getting everybody into the House. I hope they'll all get in soon.

I'm happy to rise and lead off the debate on my private member's resolution to reopen the birthing unit at Stevenson Memorial Hospital in my hometown of Alliston. Alliston is where I was raised. Growing up, I pumped gas at my grandfather's Loretto Tavern and Store and bagged groceries at the Alliston IGA. My father owned Jack Wilson Appliances on Victoria Street and my mother, Theresa, taught at St. Paul's school for over 33 years. My family has lived in the area for more than 200 years. When I was growing up we lived on Banting Drive, just a stone's throw away from Stevenson Memorial Hospital. My parents continue to live in Alliston on Queen Street just behind the bowling alley.

For as long as I can remember, Stevenson Memorial Hospital has always provided a high level of care to the people of our community. In fact, in the past year they've been recognized as one of the top five hospitals in Ontario when it comes to providing shorter waiting times

for cataract surgery. Despite the challenges that almost every hospital in Ontario faces with respect to physician recruitment and coverage, they have managed to cope with 33,000 emergency visits a year. This is a number that is comparable to Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto and certainly higher than any other comparable community hospital. The staff, volunteers and health care providers deserve great credit for these accomplishments. Furthermore, our obstetrician and midwives, nurses and staff of the former obstetrical unit deserve our unending praise for making every effort over the past few years to keep the unit open, and we're all here to thank you for a job well done.

On December 15, 2006, the hospital chose to close its labour and delivery program as a result of funding and medical manpower shortages. The community's objection to this closure was so incredible that over 500 people attended a public meeting on this issue on November 30, 2006. That's one of the largest public meetings I've ever witnessed in my riding. Not only that, but several key hospital donors have put the hospital on notice, advising that their contributions are contingent on a local obstetrical unit. Honda, our region's largest employer, has voiced similar concerns directly to the Ministry of Health.

This closure is not only about pride and inconvenience, but moreover it's about safety. Since December, expectant mothers in our area have been forced to drive, at the very least, 45 minutes to another hospital in Orangeville, Barrie or Newmarket to give birth.

In the gallery today is Marie Quincy. She spoke out front just a few minutes ago. She gave birth in the emergency department during this closure, with the help of midwives. We're also joined by Tamara Fishcher-Cullen and Angela Cole, two expectant mothers whose babies should be born in Alliston. And there is another mother, Katie Able, who gave birth on the way to Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket, not in the hospital but in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. Had we had a local obstetrical unit, this would never have happened. She was fortunate that this happened in the spring and not during the winter months when treacherous driving conditions on our rural roads often force the closure of Highway 89 and Highway 400 for hours at a time.

In such a prosperous province like Ontario, I find it passing strange that the government would use the back of a taxicab or ambulance as an alternative to being born in a local hospital. I find it also very strange that this government would campaign on a promise to bring health care services closer to home but is now telling expectant mothers to drive away from home to give birth to their babies.

Our community has taken great strides and concerted efforts to come up with a sustainable solution to this problem. Not long after the announced closure, a community advisory committee was struck to explore options to maintain a sustainable obstetrics unit. The community, under the very capable leadership of Sylvia Biffis, has presented a very workable plan. As well, we are waiting for a report from Jessica Hill, the provincially appointed

convenor. I'm hopeful that the government will look at these reports and see its way to fully funding whatever model is deemed suitable toward our objective of reopening the birthing unit and providing obstetrical care.

Stevenson Memorial Hospital has capacity for up to 584 births per year. The current estimated number of babies being born in the hospital's catchment area is 854. This includes New Tecumseth, Adjala-Tosorontio, Essa and Innisfil. What we need is bridge funding to repatriate these births back to Stevenson Memorial. It is assumed that in 2007-08, we could achieve 260 births at the hospital; in 2008-09, this could jump to 350; and in the following year, it could reach 500, which would provide the hospital with enough births to sustain obstetrics under its own budget. The help we need from the province is \$601,000 in year one, \$411,000 in year two, and \$351,000 in year three, for a total of \$1.4 million over the next three years.

Under present circumstances, there is no way that the hospital can afford full obstetrical and birthing services without the support from the province, and that's why we're all here today. This is a very small and reasonable request, I say to the government, when you consider we are dealing with a \$37.9-billion health care budget. Our request is merely a fraction of a per cent; in fact, it's 0.0037% of the health budget.

The government can't tell us they don't have the money. We know that provincial revenues were \$3.4 billion higher than expected this past fiscal year, and your debt servicing costs were \$600 million lower than expected. So that's \$4 billion more you have to spend than you expected to take in this year. With \$4 billion more than you budgeted, you could easily eliminate the health tax and put \$1.4 million into Stevenson Memorial Hospital.

In last month's budget, the government gave a \$50-million grant to the Magna corporation, hardly the poorest company I've ever heard of. You also found \$5 million for Tom Parkinson's severance package from Hydro One. And yesterday, we learned in the Toronto Star that you pushed \$20 million out the door in a year-end political slush fund. Yet you can't find \$1.4 million for expectant mothers and their babies in Alliston.

Just to help highlight what an emotional and important issue this is, I want to read part of a letter I received from Erin Watson of Alliston. She wrote:

"Mr. Wilson:

"Please continue to fight to keep the birthing unit at Stevenson Memorial Hospital. I delivered all three of my children there within the last eight years, and without the hospital being so close, I don't know what I would have done when I had my first two children. I didn't have a car at the time and was a single mom. We have many single moms in our community that don't have transportation to and from Barrie and Newmarket. I could go on for hours giving reasons that closing the birthing unit would be a disaster for this community.

"I am raising my three girls here in Alliston and I want them to have the opportunity to have their babies in the

same hospital that they were born in, years from now. With the outcry that this has brought forward, I am disgusted that it's being considered further. If there is anything I can do to help stop this, please let me know. I am more than happy to help."

1110

This is just a sample of the many, many letters and e-mails I have received. It speaks volumes as to how important and emotional it is to welcome into the world new human life. Mothers deserve this government's full support.

I must remind the government that prior to the announcement that our birthing unit would be closed, you secretly agreed to let the birthing unit go and you helped the hospital establish new prenatal and postnatal programs, but so far you won't fund birthing. So I ask, don't you think it's cruel to force women to have their prenatal and postnatal care in different places and then give birth somewhere else? What about continuity of care, and the need and ability to develop good relationships with doctors and midwives? What about privacy? After all, giving birth is a very personal matter, and having to deal with different health care providers at various locations can't be of much comfort to expectant mothers.

For as long as I am the member of provincial Parliament, I want to see a general hospital in Alliston with as many services as can possibly be provided to the public, and I'm not alone in this view. As I said, with me today are 200 people in the public galleries who have travelled from my riding to be here for this debate. They are hard-working, community-minded people who are very much representative of our area and are truly passionate about the need to provide obstetrical care in Alliston.

Our goal is to build the best birthing unit in Ontario, but we can't do that without the government's help. We're not here today to criticize the government or to make this issue a political football; we are here to ask the government to give us a chance to prove that we can do it. In my 16 years as an MPP, I can say that today represents the largest group of concerned citizens that have ever come down from my riding to Queen's Park to show support for an issue. They are here to show the government that our community is united in its determination to reopen the birthing unit. After all, as our slogan says, our babies deserve to be born in Alliston.

The Acting Speaker: I have to ask our visitors: You are not allowed to clap, as much as you might agree with your MPP.

Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): First of all, it's a privilege to speak on this particular ballot item. I would first of all like to commend the MPP for Simcoe Grey, Mr. Wilson, for not only publicizing this issue but also reaching out to his own constituents and bringing this to our attention.

I would like to speak, with respect, on a number of different fronts. First of all, I speak not only as a member of provincial Parliament in Etobicoke North but also as a family doctor who has delivered probably several hun-

dred children in different hospitals across this province; as well, I might add, as the son of an obstetrician-gynecologist, and hailing from, I guess, an obsessively medical family, if I can put it that way. So I hope that I might be able to contribute at least some perspectives, wearing these dual or triple hats: as a practitioner, as an individual who is engaged in obstetrics and gynecology and, as I say, with my particular family background.

While I can certainly appreciate the concerns that Mr. Wilson, the MPP for Simcoe-Grey, has brought forward, particularly as it echoes the hearts and minds and aspirations of so many of our visitors, I would, with respect, like to inform not only you but the people of Ontario, and particularly our visitors, about his own record with regard to hospital funding and the diffusion of medical care across Ontario. I would like to say, with as much respect as I'm capable of, that his recent conversion to the expansion of hospital services—yes, for his particular community—is particularly difficult for us as the government now to digest or to accept, given his own record in power. I would like to share that with you, if I may.

To begin with, from a press release of February 23, 1996, the then sitting Minister of Health who, as he quite rightly says, was at the forefront, at the helm, of a multi-billion dollar budget, who had his opportunity to fund, to build and to expand as much at will as he possibly could, given the advice of the day—his new funding approach for hospitals was this: “Transfers to hospitals will be reduced by \$365 million in year one; \$435 million in year two and \$570 million in year three.” So I'd like it to be clear about where the cuts, the diminishment, the reduction of hospital care, health care in this province occurred. I can attest to that not only as an MPP, not only with research that's being provided to us through government circles, but, as I say, as a practising physician who was in that system when all of these cuts were happening.

Now having said that, the record extends and the—
Interjection.

Mr. Qaadri: Sir, I listened to you with respect and with dignity, and I would simply ask that you yourself, MPP for Simcoe-Grey, particularly given your community members are here, do the same.

I would also like to inform all members, not only members of this Legislature, but also the people of Ontario and, in particular, the community members from Simcoe-Grey, that during that particular record of the Tories from 1995 to 1998, the golden era of the Mike Harris regime, they cut \$500,000 from Stevenson Memorial Hospital.

So again, I would simply say to you, Speaker, to the people of Ontario and to those assembled here, that the recent conversion, or, yes, your heartfelt request for funding, is slightly difficult for us to digest because when you, sir, and your party were at the helm, were in the corridors of power, when you had the full opportunities to increase funding, to expand, to maybe create a local centre of excellence of obstetrics and gynaecology, we wonder why that did not happen.

The other thing I would like to also extend—this is old news; it's 1996. We've moved on 10, 11 years. We can't

always be citing elements from the past. As Oscar Wilde said, no man can run from his past, even though some may try. But let's bring it up to date. The current Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Tory, has committed to reducing health care funding by slashing or removing the health premium by \$2.5 billion. Now let's be clear about that. That's a matter of public record. It's not something that is being done in a covert ops kind of way. It is on the public record. Those of us who are in health care and who watch health care and babysit health care are slightly beside ourselves to reconcile these requests that continually come from the opposition for projects across Ontario with this initiative or this commitment for reducing health care by \$2.5 billion. The two cannot happen.

So while I salute the MPP for Simcoe-Grey for bringing this to our attention, which, by the way, an expert panel is considering at this moment, as I say, you really have to live your own record and walk your own talk, because for those of us who are in health care, who deliver babies, who take care of people on a day-to-day basis, these are not mere words to us. This is not mere political posturing or gesturing. These are things that are going to help people and deal with people and reach people on a day-to-day basis long after any of us are still in this place. And with that, I would now offer the floor to my colleague.

1120

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I want to follow the footsteps that my colleague just presented. First of all, I understand why the folks are here today. I understand why the member for Simcoe-Grey has brought this ballot item forward. I come from a rural community. Health care and education are probably the things that are closest to the ground these days in our communities. I represent a riding that has an elderly population, and health care is even more important. That's not to say that obstetrics is not; it is very important.

I guess I best relate to things that I've experienced. I'm one who believes in “touch, feel and see”; I can relate to it better than just reading from a script. About 10 years ago, the community that I happened to be mayor of, Brighton, in the county of Northumberland, was faced with the closure of a hospital in Trenton that served probably 90% of that community. It was done under the auspices of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. We were going to lose that hospital that was very dear to the folks of Trenton and Quinte West, very dear to the municipality of Brighton. And the same thing happened: Busloads of people came to Queen's Park.

Interjection.

Mr. Rinaldi: You know what? I didn't come that day. I guess we are really touching a nerve here.

Interjection.

Mr. Rinaldi: Do they want their time, Mr. Speaker? We listened attentively because I know it's very important to those people, and I'm quite disturbed that they're not even—

Interjection.

Mr. Rinaldi: So those people came here, and do you know what? They managed to save the Trenton hospital site. They managed to save it, but they lost obstetrics out of it. So when I talk about the personal feeling towards that type of function—the folks in Brighton and Quinte West now have to go to Belleville for obstetrics, which has probably one of the finest obstetrics departments in that part of the province.

I guess it will be five years ago next month—I've got to count now; my wife will probably get upset at this. It was probably my fifth grandchild, and yes, we had to drive about 20 minutes. My son and daughter-in-law live in Colborne, a little bit farther west, and they had to go to the Belleville hospital site. But I can say without regret that, yes, if there were obstetrics in Trenton, they were probably about 20 minutes closer, but I know that the obstetrics in Trenton didn't have equipment, even when it was running, as good as the one in Belleville.

There were some complications which, thank God, don't happen very often. This was a serious situation, and I can tell you that the team of doctors at the Belleville hospital unequivocally assured my son, his wife, my daughter-in-law, and the grandparents on both sides that if it hadn't been for the equipment available at the well-equipped obstetrics department in Belleville, I would be less one grandson today. That's a sad thing to say.

So, not to devalue the issue of why these folks are here today and why the member from Simcoe–Grey is fighting, but I think we all go through those things of trying to have the best possible equipment anywhere, you know, in our backyards. With today's technology and today's availability of that type of equipment, the reality is that we cannot have a fully equipped hospital in every one of our backyards as much as we would like to. I would be the first one to fight for that, but we have to face reality.

I know there have been some challenges at this particular hospital, at Stevenson Memorial. I'm sure it's a great hospital, otherwise these people wouldn't be here today. They need to be congratulated for speaking up for their hospital. I think we all do that, whether we are in government or not in government, in the opposition. I can tell you, although I wasn't here, that I lost a hospital in Port Hope. The folks in Port Hope, in the west end of my riding, still remember. They all had given money, there was a foundation and all those good things, but they did lose a hospital. So not in this capacity but as a local mayor from a neighbouring municipality, I fully understand what it is like to lose services.

One of the things I will add to this is that there has been—at least from the information I was given, and hopefully I'm correct—in this particular case a lack of obstetricians to fulfill the commitment. And yes, there is a lack of specialists, there is a lack of doctors, not just from this government but from the previous government as well, and the government before that, I must say. So we can blame all we want, but the reality is that there is a lack of professionals out there that we all need to work together to rebuild.

I have three hospitals in my riding, and do you know what? There's a shortage of physicians. There are short-

ages of family doctors. It's particularly an issue in rural Ontario.

I would say to the folks in the gallery and to the member opposite from Simcoe–Grey that nobody is objecting to the reality of this issue. The challenge is, how do we keep an obstetrics wing open when there are no obstetricians to look after it, when there's not the proper equipment? I think we have to be very concerned about safety, because when people walk into a hospital, whether it's for obstetrics or whatever other emergency, we want to make sure that we have the best professionals, the best equipment to deal with them. I think as Ontarians we deserve that.

We know we've had this. This is non-partisan. I have no problem going to my doctor or to a hospital, because when I go through that door I know that they are the best possible people. Unfortunately, there is a shortage. I guess I could stand here and point fingers, but that's not going to solve the problem.

We need to move those yardsticks. I know, from my notes, that there's a panel that has been appointed that's working on the issue in this particular case. I would encourage the folks from the community to work with this panel, recognize those needs, and let's try to move forward.

For somebody to ask, "Let's just do this," without any proper background, without trying to deal with the tools that we need to solve the issue, it would be just as well to say, "I want to go to the moon today." Well, that ain't going to happen that quickly. So I would suggest that we follow a process. Just to support this motion on a whim, at will, is going to be very difficult for me to do.

Having said that, I see my time is expiring. I congratulate the folks for being down here today because I know how dear this is to them. We're working with you and we're hoping to solve the problem as soon as possible.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I want to congratulate the member for Simcoe–Grey. He is a former Minister of Health and he has fought passionately for 16 or 17 years in this Legislature on behalf of the people in the riding that he represents. Certainly this is one of the issues that he has been most passionate about, and that is to ensure that women and families in his community continue to have access to the birthing unit and the obstetrical care that is needed as close to home as possible.

In that desire to ensure that \$1.4 million is provided to Stevenson Memorial Hospital, I would say to you that this member is right on track with the recommendations of reports that have been released in recent months here in the province of Ontario and elsewhere. In fact, there is a report that was done by the Ontario Women's Health Council. It was released last September, 2006. Unfortunately, this government has taken absolutely no action on the report whatsoever, despite the fact that I have a letter here from the Association of Ontario Midwives and I have received other letters from those who are involved in the delivery of obstetrical and birthing care. We are headed for a crisis in maternity care in Ontario. There is a growing need to take action.

If we take a look at the report that's been sitting on the minister's desk, the vision that this panel had is this: Every woman in Ontario should have access to high-quality woman- and family-centred maternity care as close to home as possible. That's what this member is trying to ensure happens in his community in order that his hospital can continue to remain open and that the births will continue to take place. As a person who has given birth myself, I know how important that is.

This report of the Ontario Women's Health Council, which we set up when we were in office, goes on to state that we must ensure we can integrate services so that women and newborns can receive health care services close to home.

1130

You know what else it says? And maybe that's why this government is taking no action. It also says that we need to declare a moratorium on maternity care program closures in those communities where there are decisions being made. Certainly, Stevenson Memorial Hospital would qualify. If these recommendations had been implemented, if it wasn't sitting on the minister's desk, then the people in the Alliston community would have had support from the government, the \$1.4 million would have been provided, and we wouldn't be debating this resolution today.

The government has an opportunity to step up to the plate. We have a crisis not just in the Alliston community; we have a crisis throughout the province of Ontario. The reality is, we have a growing population and we need to respond to the concerns. More and more women throughout this province are currently unable to access the care they need, and there are certainly reasons for concern. We are seeing closures, such as the one that has happened at Stevenson Memorial Hospital, across the province, and that is reason for concern. We know that, unfortunately, the communities that are impacted by the closures are rural and northern communities.

That report and other reports also talk about the fact that when you have these closures in communities and women and their families are forced to travel distances for care, you are putting these women at enormous risk. I think my colleague has alluded to some of the situations that have occurred. When I was about to give birth to my first child, I was glad that I didn't have to go miles and miles and miles, because, I'll tell you, things happen pretty quickly. I was glad that the hospital was in my local community. If you take a look at the reports, they state that once you start to remove these birthing units and the obstetrical care further away from home, women are put at risk when they are required to travel longer, and we know that in this province, with our winters and our weather, it is potentially unsafe at times to travel by car. We need to take that into consideration.

We need to move forward. We need to recognize there is a crisis in the province of Ontario. We need to recognize that a panel report has been released; it is recommending changes. However, the government has not acted on the changes whatsoever. We need to take in this

province a woman-centred approach to maternity care. It is important that women have access to birthing units within their communities and that they can be attended by the maternity care provider of their choice. We need to always place the needs of the mother and the child at the centre of any care that we provide.

Today I strongly support the resolution that has been put forward by my colleague. It is really in the same vein as the recommendations coming out of the women's health council report, and that is that we need to put a moratorium on these closures of birthing units and the provision of obstetrical care in these smaller rural and northern communities. There are definitely advantages to making sure—in fact, it is recommended. Every report you look at talks about the need for the care to be provided as close to home as possible, and we need to do this. We need to recognize that maternity care is important. It is a priority, and it should be for all governments. We need to be developing a comprehensive provincial strategy. I hope that this member's resolution, which has been put on the table and which speaks not only to the situation in his community but the situation throughout the province of Ontario, will finally motivate this government to develop a strategy that would recognize the need to put women and their children at the centre of health care, a strategy that would ensure that they are able to deliver their children as close to home as possible and that recognizes that there are obstacles and safety risks if that is not allowed to happen.

I congratulate my colleague. He has worked hard. I have been in this Legislature since he has, since 1990. He has been a passionate advocate, and I'll tell you, to bring out more than 200 people from your community is remarkable. I want to congratulate and thank the people for being here, for speaking out and letting the government know that you want to make sure your children, your future generations, will have the opportunity to be born at Stevenson Memorial Hospital. Thank you for coming, and thank you to my colleague.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It is a privilege and a pleasure to stand today to speak in support of this motion from my colleague from Simcoe–Grey.

First of all, I would like to thank the people who have taken the time, I'm sure, out of their very busy lives to come down here to the Legislature to see exactly what happens and perhaps how government does not work.

This is the second such motion today. Private members' business is an opportunity for a private member who cannot otherwise get something accomplished through the various machinations of government to come before the Legislature and put his or her case before colleagues, to try to indicate, usually to backbench members and members of the opposition, how the government in some way is not listening to the needs of his or her community.

I think the member from Simcoe–Grey has done an admirable job today in putting forward the need, and why there needs to be a birthing unit in Alliston. It seems to me rudimentary, it seems to me absolutely plain, that this

is something every community would want to have. I cannot understand why the government would not provide a facility to your community or, quite literally, any other community in this province that asks for something as simple and as basic in a hospital as a birthing unit.

What he is asking for today by government standards is probably one of the smallest amounts of money I've ever heard anyone ask for—\$1.4 million. From time to time there are people who ask for less, but in the grand scheme of a \$70-billion or \$80-billion amount of money that is spent in this province annually or in the small scheme of \$38 billion that is spent for health care in this province, \$1.4 million spread out over three years is pretty small potatoes.

As a private member, he has put forward this motion, and as a private member, his colleague the member from Burlington put forward a similar one about an hour ago, simply asking that their community be listened to and that they be granted what the rest of us in the province seem to take for granted. The reason he has had to do this is that he believes, and I believe all of you by your very presence here believe, that you are not getting your fair share from this government. It seems to me quite obvious that that's what this is about.

There is money galore for many things in this province. There is money galore for many hospitals. There is money galore for Magna International that's been talked about. There is money galore, we learned yesterday, for people to be handed out, willy-nilly; \$20 million to every group that seems at the last minute to not even put in an application, but get money anyway. Why isn't there money, I have to ask—and I have to ask on his behalf because it's my turn to speak—for the good people of your community to get a birthing unit?

For many years before I came to this place, as a municipal politician, as a mayor, as a megacity councillor, I served on the board of health of two communities. One of the things that was very apparent to me was that where money needed to be spent and was spent in my communities of East York and Toronto was in birthing units, because we had a policy through the board of health on low-birth-weight babies. We had a policy on giving the very best care to expectant mothers so that babies were born healthy. We had a policy on making sure they didn't smoke, they didn't drink, that they ate sufficient foods. We even had a policy of topping up welfare payments for those who didn't have enough money, to make sure they could have milk and protein so that when they were in the gestation period, those women would give the very best advantage to their child.

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I don't understand why this government thinks this is not a priority. They seem to find priorities everywhere else. They seem to find priorities when it comes to hip and knee replacement surgery. I'm not saying that's a bad thing; that's a priority for this government. But I have to ask, is it not a priority to make sure that each and every child is born in a safe environment, that each and every mother gives birth in a safe environment, and in

those cases where there are complications, there are trained people there at the time of birth and immediately after to look after the health of both the mother and the newborn child? It seems to me that's a far greater priority than hip and knee replacement surgery.

I'm sure I'm going to get some letters and e-mails when I say that, because there is of course a waiting list, and we have many people in this province who need that surgery, but always we need to look at who is in the greatest need. Who could possibly be in greater need than a young child who is born with complications, a young child who needs immediate service, a young child who needs to be born in a hospital, not in an ambulance, not at home—unless of course it's uncomplicated—and not in the back of a taxicab?

So I ask the government: Please find the priority. One point four million dollars is a very small amount of money. If you can find it for Magna International, and if Mr. Colle, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, can find it here, there and everywhere for groups that haven't even made an application, surely you must know that this need is one to be met. Budgets are all about priorities, and this should be your priority.

I have to question you. I ask you to ask yourself these two simple questions: Are the needs of the women and children and families in this and other communities less than those in communities like my own in Toronto? I have lived in this community my whole life. There are five major hospitals right down the street, within a couple of hundred metres of this location. I was born in one of them, at Women's College Hospital, several hundred metres from where I'm standing today. There were services then and there are services now for this great metropolitan place. But those of us who choose to live in smaller towns, those of us who have jobs in other locations, need and should expect the same kind of quality service that the rest of us here take for granted. What I have for myself, I want for all of you, and what I have for myself and my community should be vested in your community as well. Certainly for \$1.4 million, it can and should be there.

The second question I have for the government is: Would this not have been included in the minister's budget? I know my friend has talked about this many times in this House and I know that this issue has been raised. I'm very curious as to why it would not have been included in the budget. Why was the birthing unit for Alliston passed over when the Minister of Finance stood in his place and got up from his seat a few weeks ago and announced how he was spending gazillions of dollars on all kinds of things and saying he had priorities? Why was this not a priority? It's a pretty simple question.

I'm asking the members opposite—and two have spoken from the government side. They have not said they're going to vote for this and they have not said they're not going to vote for it, but they have spoken in terms which would cause me some concern. They have spoken about what the Conservatives did when they were in government. I'm tired of listening to that kind of stuff.

I'm tired of listening, every time there is a sensible question or a politician stands in this place, and the only answer is, "When you were in government, you did something." For people like me and like my colleague from Burlington who have never been in government, I think it's an idle statement to make. What I'm asking you to do is, first of all, to support this motion and then leave this place and impress upon the Minister of Health that he find the monies. We were able yesterday to find year-end funds for a whole broad range of things and we learned all about those yesterday. Certainly this is as deserving as or more deserving than some of those who received the funds yesterday.

I want to leave a few minutes for my colleague, but I would like to close by asking the members of this House to simply give this application the priority that it deserves. If ever, in my riding of Beaches–East York, I could bring out 200 people like you have brought out here today, I would know that this is an issue upon which my community was seized. I know that the people here have great expectations.

I hope they learn today that government can work. It can only work—not by my speaking or the member from Simcoe–Grey—when those who hold the purse strings, i.e., those in the cabinet, decide to loosen them. It can only work when the backbench of the Liberal government stands united and tells the minister that there is a priority that is not being met and that the money needs to be found.

It can only work when a government and a Premier understand that they have an obligation to you, the same obligation they have to everyone else in this province, to do what is best for all of us.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to stand today to speak to the resolution put forward by my colleague from Simcoe–Grey, and to congratulate him and thank him for all the hard work he has done on behalf of his community on this very important issue.

He has brought it to the Legislature through every means possible—petitions, questions, resolution, debate—a tireless effort he has made on behalf of his community, and I want to thank him for that. He has worked with community organizations, and I want to welcome all the people in the gallery here today. For over 200 people from a community to come forward is just outstanding. I praise Jim for the work he has done to create the plan to have the birthing unit reopened. He was first elected to the Legislature in 1990. It's clear from all the hard work that he has done—he's been re-elected four times—that he is a very strong advocate for his riding.

I'm pleased to support the resolution that was brought forward here—that of the Stevenson Memorial Hospital with the required \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years so that it can reopen its birthing unit—and to emphasize to the government that it is a priority. You should put it in the budget. You should address it.

When you recklessly throw over \$20 million away at year-end spending—and here we have a community that

only requires \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years for the birthing unit—you should be embarrassed that you have not addressed this situation, because you've heard about it for a long, long time.

I can speak as a registered nurse for over 20 years and the time I spent in hospitals, in my local hospital in Lindsay, how they had worked towards and got a new birthing unit, and how important it is for communities that women can get the care they need close to the communities they live in.

We live in rural ridings—winter conditions, treacherous roads—and you have to bring this down to the safety of people in Ontario. By ignoring this request—which is not over the top, it's practical; it's a member of provincial Parliament repeatedly telling you the needs of his community, something that could be done easily. That you haven't made that a priority is unexplainable.

He's had to come here for private members' public business on Thursday mornings to bring a resolution forward to you to deal with this, when it's a logical thing that you should've done.

I hope the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care does come here and I hope to see how he votes on this resolution today. This is just an embarrassment for this government. You put a health care tax on, an extra \$2-billion kitty. Is that money going to health care? Well, we have to question where that money is going. You did a tax grab to the people of Ontario, and the people of Alliston—are they getting better care for paying more money on their health care tax? I think not, when they're here. There are 200 people here today to say to you, the McGuinty government, "We are not getting better health care. You have not put our health care tax dollars, that you have taken out of our pockets, to work."

It is embarrassing. It just is embarrassing. There are over a million people in Ontario alone who don't have a family doctor—130,000 children. Are you addressing those needs? You're taking more money from them for the health care tax. Are you addressing those needs? Those are terrible statistics. The number of underserved areas has gone up dramatically since you've been in government. They peaked at 143 in June 2005—143 underserved communities in our province. What have you done to fill that doctor shortage? You could go on and on. I'm glad the member has brought this resolution here today because we need to highlight to the people of Ontario that you are not spending their tax dollars wisely.

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According to the piece by the Stevenson Memorial Hospital in the Alliston Herald on April 13, hospitals in small rural communities do not have enough births to provide the income expected by specialists such as obstetricians. The community hospitals have to give the specialists an income guarantee, meaning the hospital has to use operating funds to top up doctors' salaries if their fee-for-service income does not rise to the level of expectation in a certain amount of time. According to the Stevenson Memorial Hospital, this has cost the hospital hundreds of thousands of dollars in recent years.

Like I said, the government could have assisted that community in different means. It is not a large amount of money they are asking for when you look at the huge health care budget the government has and the dollars involved there. They're not asking for a huge amount, and they deserve to have a birthing unit in Alliston. The Women's Health Council—the issues brought forward by the Women's Health Council—is recommending that there be a moratorium on closures, that there be more assistance for women in communities. They shouldn't have to call a cab to go to another community in an emergency or put their family at risk of driving in treacherous conditions to go to a birthing centre. People in Alliston are so extremely upset, and they should be.

The member from Simcoe–Grey was quoted in a local newspaper as saying, “I am not backing down,” and today, true to his word, with this huge group of people here from his community supporting this resolution, he said that the residents in the area of Simcoe–Grey deserve to have their babies born in Alliston. He's been a great champion; we all know about it. The member from Beaches–East York also has spoken passionately about it. The critic from our party for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has spoken from her experience as minister, but as a mother also, on the importance of having a birthing unit close to home and the security that women need.

I thank the member from Simcoe–Grey for bringing this forward. I thank the member from Burlington for bringing her local health issue forward to the Legislature earlier today to highlight the needs of their communities and to try and force the government to act, and to act now. They should be embarrassed into acting.

I see the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has come into the room, so I'm sure he's been anxiously listening to the debate. We'll be very interested to see his response to both of these resolutions that have been brought before the Legislature today to increase the level of health care in the communities of Ontario. I thank the member from Simcoe–Grey again for bringing this forward and for the opportunity to speak in support of it this morning.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): It's a pleasure to speak in support of this bill. For all of those gathered here, I have to commend your show of support and concern for your community. It's wonderful and it's rarely seen here, so thank you.

I speak in support of the member from Simcoe–Grey. You have to know the frustration that has brought him to this point, the frustration for such a small amount of money over such a long period of time, to have to stand up in the House, to have to present a motion just to get what should be forthcoming without really much thought. That's the frustration we, on this side of the House, all feel right now with this government.

I was not here to hear some of the concerns. I did raise the fact that we're now in the 60-year anniversary of the introduction of the first medicare system in Saskatch-

ewan, which was introduced in 1947. I feel the spirit of Tommy Douglas upon this place and hope that inspires those across the aisle to do the right thing in this regard.

I also want to point out in relative terms how little this amount of money is. Perhaps those who are gathered here are not all aware of the fact that this is the government that voted themselves a 25% pay increase eight days before Christmas and just got another 2% on top of that. That is far more money over the next three years than what you're asking for here in this birthing unit for women and children, many of them at risk if they don't get it. There's a comparison for you. You don't even have to look at the \$50 million to Magna. But clearly, we see where this government has its priorities, and it's not with the women and children of this community—just to put that in perspective, as well.

Again, I come back to what makes us proud Ontarians and what makes us proud Canadians. When you go south of the border, it always comes down to those two wonderful aspects of Canadian and Ontarian life: medicare and funded public schools that you would want to send your children to and public secondary schools that you would want to send your children to, that don't cost you another mortgage on the house, the way they do for our neighbours south of the border where a third of their population are not covered by medicare or health care of any sort.

Here we see an instance of frustration, an instance of where it has had to come to the floor of the House. You've had to drive many miles to sit in this gallery to listen to two hours of this, just to get such a paltry sum of money extended to such an absolutely necessary service. This government should be ashamed. They certainly didn't run on that platform. They certainly didn't run on a platform of increasing privatization of the health care system and not fully funding institutions of health, hospitals and others. They certainly didn't run on that. That wasn't the promise we heard in 2003. Of course, we heard a lot in 2003 that we haven't seen delivered in this House.

Here is one instance where we could call upon everyone to vote with their hearts and not along partisan lines. There are many here who sit in the back benches of the Liberal Party, who know what it's like to be the MPP in a smaller community and to answer to people who don't have 200 members of their community sitting here today, but who can appreciate what went into this action and what went into this motion, and can vote not along partisan lines but with their hearts, minds and souls, and say yes to what is clearly a very small request for a very important service.

So absolutely, I think that we should all in this House support this motion. It's an unfortunate set of circumstances that have brought us to this moment where we have to talk about such a paltry sum in the House, but that we have; so be it. Let's do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe–Grey has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Wilson: Again, I want to thank, as my colleagues have very kindly thanked, the over 200 people who have come down from Alliston, New Tecumseth, Essa and Adjala-Tosorontio and Innisfil—there are some people here from Innisfil. Some people have taken time out of their work here in Toronto to come over today, too. I want to thank the midwives who are here, and the doctors, physicians, nurses and staff at our hospital who do good work every day.

I'm very, very pleased that the Minister of Health has joined us this morning. I have tried, as members have pointed out, everything possible to get \$1.5 million out of you. This is a hard figure, George; this isn't a fudged one. So many other people ask for the moon and meet you halfway.

A study has been done. We are waiting. I do thank you for appointing Jessica Hill, who was my assistant deputy minister when I was Minister of Health, and went on to be a deputy minister in the children's ministry. She is highly respected. I thank the government for appointing the provincial convenor. Her report will come soon. I hope you will take her report, along with the report done that was by the community advisory committee, a committee of the hospital board that was ably chaired by Sylvia Biffis, and consider our request.

All we're asking is that you give us a chance. Give us a chance to develop the best birthing unit in Ontario. Kate Mooij just reminded me with a note that she sent down from the gallery—and she's our physician recruiter at Stevenson Memorial Hospital—that we have eight obstetricians waiting to be interviewed. So I say to the member for Northumberland, who said it must be a case of not having enough doctors around, that we have eight who want to come to Alliston.

Alliston is the potato capital of Ontario. With the greenbelt now in place, it is the place of choice for people to move to, out of Toronto and into south Simcoe and the Alliston area. Honda is expanding and creating another 1,200 jobs. There are over 7,000 people who work in and around that plant. They are young families. They are in their baby years. They want to have their babies born in Alliston, and their babies deserve to be born in Alliston.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

JOSEPH BRANT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will first deal with ballot item number 79, which stands in the name of Mrs. Savoline.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after we've dealt with the second ballot item.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will now deal with the second ballot item that has been debated this morning.

Mr. Wilson has moved private member's notice of motion number 55, ballot item number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

JOSEPH BRANT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mrs. Savoline has moved private member's notice of motion number 57. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Hardeman, Ernie
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.

Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Jeffrey, Linda

Kwinter, Monte
McMeekin, Ted
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Qaadri, Shafiq

Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 18.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I will now direct the Sergeant at Arms to open the doors for 30 seconds.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved private member's resolution number 55. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Hardeman, Ernie
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.

Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Jeffrey, Linda

Kwinter, Monte
McMeekin, Ted
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Qaadri, Shafiq

Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 17; the nays are 18.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been completed, I do now leave the chair, and this House will resume at 1:30 p.m.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):
I want to set the record straight on a couple of things with regard to funding for the Phoenix Centre for children's mental health in my riding and some statements the Minister of Children and Youth Services has tried to take credit for, and also for solving this crisis.

For months we have been looking for money for this centre, and the minister turned it down repeatedly. I want to read her quote from the Ottawa Citizen, citing the fact that she felt the federal government should pay for it: "The federal government needs to understand that the province of Ontario cannot pick up the tab for the impact of that effort on the families of military personnel." She denied the funding on that basis.

It went to the Ombudsman, and I want to read what the Ombudsman said: "It is absolutely undeniable, indisputable, that the provincial government is solely responsible for providing mental health services to children of members of the Canadian Forces in Petawawa."

Then the government ponied up with some money, but the minister tried to take some credit for it and said she brokered that with the federal government.

I want to read what he said in his report as well: "The federal government I found to be quite reasonably disposed to speak to the province, but their phone never rang. The Minister of Children and Youth Services would say in the House ... in letters that she wrote, 'Address your concerns to the federal government' ... but there was no effort by the ministry to contact the federal government and say, 'Can you guys cough up some cash?'"

It is a shame—it is reprehensible, in fact—that it took the Ombudsman to get this government to act and stop victimizing the children of the Canadian Forces base in my riding.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I just want the let everybody in the Legislature and beyond know that our world-class wine industry has just become that much more world-class and cutting-edge with some tremendous leadership, vision and foresight. Yesterday the Wine Council of Ontario launched Sustainable Wine-making Ontario, the first program of its kind in Canada, in an effort to preserve and protect the environment.

It is a comprehensive program which will be a great asset for wineries in helping them with continuous improvement in sustainability of our environment. They have been working on this for three years now, and there is some tremendous foresight that's gone into this. The program will not only cover the areas of winemaking, but also grape-growing and winery hospitality.

The goals of the program include improvements in energy use per unit of production, decreases in water use, improved management in waste water and more efficient use of materials throughout the businesses. Long-term objectives include measuring improvements in air quality, water quality, waste water management, natural resource management, resource use and management of water resources including watershed management.

This is all tremendous forward thinking, and I applaud the Wine Council of Ontario in their actions. We've talked for decades about sustainable development and sustainability. It's programs like this that actually turn this into a reality for us and think about the future. Our government has tremendous faith in the future of that industry, proven by our greenbelt and also by the new wine secretariat, which is being chaired by our own dean of the Legislature, Minister Jim Bradley.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Yesterday, we learned that the Liberals have been handing out hundreds of thousands of dollars from a Ministry of Citizenship slush fund, with no accountability to the taxpayers. The funding was given out at the behest of the federal Liberal MP for Beaches–East York. The recipient group is headed up by her riding association vice-president.

The minister tells us that "there isn't time" at the end of the year to seek out proposals from alternate groups. Of course there isn't time if you deliberately set up a slush fund to give out money at the end of the year.

How can we have confidence in a program with no standards and no accountability? Taxpayers deserve to know that their money is spent responsibly. They want to know that the government is making its decisions in a fair and impartial way. If this government wants to help immigrants build new lives in Canada, it must set clear standards and outcomes so we can be confident that the money will actually help.

What is clear is that this minister puts the re-election of Liberals ahead of helping new immigrants. A John

Tory government will put helping new immigrants and all Ontarians first.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition is meeting as we speak in a day-long conference. I want to read some of their statements about the McGuinty government:

"Despite a recent budget promising anti-poverty measures, Ontario's poorest citizens remain worse off now than when the McGuinty government was elected in 2003. Nearly half a million Ontario children are growing up poor. Meanwhile hunger is widespread, with food banks serving 330,000 Ontarians each month. Many are working people whose low wages trap them in poverty....

"The facts, outlined in *Lives Still in the Balance*," their report, "are disturbing. Combining up-to-date analysis from leading anti-poverty advocates and academic analysts with first-hand accounts from low-income people, the book sketches a colossal social deficit of poverty, hunger and homelessness....

"We chose the book's title because people's lives are at stake," says editor Murray MacAdam. 'Why does our wealthy province tolerate allowing one citizen in six to live in poverty? Where are our values? Will the government, and the opposition parties, develop and promote a credible anti-poverty agenda?'"

They are saying that as we speak, and they are meeting—faith leaders across the faith spectrum who are sorely disappointed in the outcome of all the promises that Dalton McGuinty and his government made.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today to highlight the leader of the official opposition's record on health care and the legacy of cuts, damage and neglect his party left on our health care system.

Our government is putting more money and resources into our health care system, and we've been moving forward with our plan to revitalize Ontario's health care system.

The previous government left our health care system in ruin, downloading funding for public health on to local property taxpayers and voting against our legislation, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which bans two-tier health care. The leader of the official opposition has promised that he will take \$2.5 billion out of the health care system and then work to implement for-profit, private health care. That is unacceptable, and we will not let this happen.

The McGuinty government has already greatly increased Ontario's spending on public health. With our recent budget, funding to our public health care system is up by \$8.5 billion, or 29%, since we took office. We've invested \$156 million for three new childhood vaccines

and are uploading 75% of the cost of public health from municipalities to the province. We have also invested \$114 million to help the William Osler Health Centre get ready to open its doors this fall. I'm incredibly excited about this new project for Brampton and what it means for the people of my riding.

We know there's more to do, but our public health care system is beginning to flourish under the McGuinty government, and we won't let the Leader of the Opposition turn back the clock on our progress.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): We have recently learned that this government is using political slush funds to try to keep themselves afloat. Once again they are demonstrating a complete lack of integrity. Let's remember who these people are:

—The Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, who was the first member in history to be formally reprimanded by the Integrity Commissioner for breaching the Members' Integrity Act. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

—The Minister of Children and Youth Services, who allowed money to be spent for fancy SUVs and trips instead of children, and who only dealt with the problem when she was caught by the auditor. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

—The Minister of Health Promotion, who gave away his \$26.4-million slush fund and never gave municipalities a chance to apply, so most of them were never even considered. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

—Don't forget the minister responsible for lotteries, who found out about a \$100-million fraud and, instead of taking action to fix the problem, tried to cover it up. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

—And now we have the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who gave away \$250,000 to an organization with Liberal ties without an application process, without letting anyone else apply for the money. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

When will the Premier start holding his ministers accountable? I think the time is now.

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ONTARIO COACHES WEEK

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I rise today to celebrate and recognize Ontario's 300,000 community sports coaches. April 14 through April 21 has been designated as Ontario Coaches Week, an initiative launched by the Coaches Association of Ontario with the support of both the province of Ontario and the government of Canada.

During Ontario Coaches Week, close to 1,000 men and women will attend clinics and workshops across Ontario to develop their skills and learn more about coaching young people and becoming better coaches. Coaching workshops will be held in 40 different communities, like

Kenora, Port Hope, Hawkesbury and Grand Bend. A number of Ontario's First Nations communities will be opening up free coaching education opportunities in places like Constance Lake, Christian Island and Alderville.

The goal of the week is to help bring quality sport programs to thousands of children by inspiring more Ontarians to take up coaching as their volunteer activity. Good coaches can positively influence a child's self-confidence and attitude toward sport, fitness and health as a life-long pursuit.

Present in the House during my statement are the following members of the coaches association: Susan Kitchen, Jessica Taggio, Jamie Beblow, Mike Naylor and Faye Blackwood. Perhaps members could welcome them to the House.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I rise in the House today to talk about John Tory's latest scheme. It's about power, and frankly, I'm shocked. It's now clear that the Leader of the Opposition has run out of steam with his stale ideas, and Ontarians deserve to know more.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mrs. Mitchell: John Tory is pro-coal.

Interjections.

Mrs. Mitchell: Unfortunately for Ontarians, his ideas are stuck in the past. John Tory and the Conservative caucus continue to defend dirty air and false science.

Last night, the member for more coal finally uttered the words the rest of us knew he wanted to say for quite some time. John Tory wants to spend more and get less by wasting tax dollars on scrubbers that don't work.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member tends to insist on calling the Leader of the Opposition by name, as opposed to "Leader of the Opposition."

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for the reminder. I remind all members—all members.

The member for Huron-Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: The science is clear: Scrubbers don't work. The Leader of the Opposition has obviously been listening to his caucus colleagues, who all voted against Kyoto in this Legislature. Under the previous government, coal use increased 127% and harmful emissions from coal plants increased by 120%.

The details are foggy, but one thing is clear: The McGuinty government has a balanced plan and we will ensure that the people have a steady supply of clean, affordable power that tackles climate change and smog. We are the only party committed to—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise today to talk about nuclear energy and the Leader of the Oppo-

sition's reckless new plan to rush environmental safeguards and build more nuclear power plants in secret locations.

Interjections.

Mr. Fonseca: Last night John Tory revealed, "We need nuclear; we need more than they are saying we need." The public deserves to know: Where does he plan to put these new nuclear plants? Orangeville, Renfrew, Lanark, Haliburton or maybe all of the above? And let's not forget the people of Mississauga, who deserve to know where Tim Peterson and John Tory would build new nuclear plants.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member, just take your seat for a moment. The clock is stopped, so you'll get your time, and I am sure the members will sit and listen, and give you the floor.

The member for Mississauga East.

Mr. Fonseca: Let's not forget that the people of Mississauga deserve to know where Tim Peterson and John Tory would build these new nuclear plans. It sounds to me like the Tories are pitching for a new nuclear plant in Mississauga. I know the people in my community don't want one there, and neither do I.

Interjections.

Mr. Fonseca: Tim Peterson and John Tory need to come clean. It's the least they can do. John Tory has an outdated, shoot-from-the-hip approach to energy. It's reckless, unworkable and irresponsible.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I thought Thursdays were quiet days around here, so let's try to keep it that way.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): This week I had the pleasure to address the delegates at the annual conference of the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, and the annual conference of the International Association of Labour Inspection. IAPA's conference is one of the most important annual health and safety conferences in Canada. The added presence this year of the International Association of Labour Inspection's conference is of particular importance. It was Ontario's record of achievement in the field of workplace health and safety that attracted the association to hold its conference here. It's the first time that this conference has ever been held in North America. Here in Toronto this week, there are delegates from 50 countries around the world.

I had the opportunity to share with the participants some important news about workplace injury prevention and cost avoidance for businesses here in the province of Ontario. In less than three years, there have been 30,000

fewer lost-time injuries to Ontario workers than there would have been had lost-time injury rates remained constant.

This means 30,000 fewer cases of human suffering. It means that 30,000 families have not had to see their loved ones injured or possibly even permanently disabled or, worse, killed on the job. Stop and think about this for a moment. I'm talking about 30,000 people. That's equal to about the population of Orillia. It means that Ontario businesses have avoided over \$2 billion in costs associated with workplace injuries. These costs include employee replacement, injury investigation, overtime pay for other employees and reduced productivity due to the loss of a skilled employee.

Our goal, which was announced in July of 2004, is to reduce lost-time injuries by 20% in this province. We said we would do this through a comprehensive, integrated health and safety strategy. The strategy would use education, training, legislation, regulation and enforcement. Most importantly, it would encompass all of our health and safety partners. Our goal is that by 2008 in this province, there will be 20,000 fewer lost-time injuries per year in Ontario than otherwise would have occurred had lost-time injury rates remained consistent, and that this reduced level will be maintained thereafter.

I'm here to tell you today that we are succeeding. In 2006 alone, more than 15,000 injuries in our workplaces were avoided. This is an achievement that we all should be proud of. Our workplace health and safety strategy is saving thousands of workers the pain and suffering of serious workplace injuries.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I hear a member mocking 15,000 fewer injuries. How disrespectful, Speaker. How very disrespectful.

With fewer accidents, employers are benefiting from reduced production losses. Employers are benefiting from lower retraining costs. Employers are benefiting from less equipment damage and other cost avoidance savings.

One key component of this strategy is our high-risk workplace initiative. The initiative focuses on workplaces with the highest injury rates and the highest costs. When we launched this initiative in July of 2004, these firms represented just 2% of all firms insured by the WSIB, but that 2% represented 10% of all lost-time injuries. Worse yet, that 2% represented 21% of the injury costs in the province of Ontario.

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Our initiative assists and educates people in these workplaces about healthier and safer work practices. At the same time, though, we continue to give priority to investigating workplace fatalities, critical injuries, work refusals, work stoppages and immediate hazards. I am pleased to report that since 2004, 11,000 firms in this province have improved their health and safety record.

Another key element is our last-chance program. In 2005, our partners, the safe work associations, were challenged to work with the Ministry of Labour by providing

5,000 workplaces with a last chance to voluntarily work to improve their health and safety records. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and all of our 12 safe work associations that rose to that challenge, because the work that I am describing depends on partnerships and co-operation: partnerships between both business and labour. A good many companies have stepped forward and have taken significant steps on their own to improve their health and safety record. We are pleased to see their progress, and we commend them for the progress they have made.

Speaker, we have to remember the history in this province. The NDP cut health and safety inspectors, the Conservatives cut health and safety inspectors: a terrible track record; no commitment to looking after and protecting our workers in this province—cuts by the NDP and cuts by the Tories. But I want to say that our ministry staff and our dedicated inspectors deserve a lot of credit for our success, because when we launched this high-risk initiative, we set about not cutting inspectors, but adding inspectors to better protect people in this province. We moved forward in hiring 200 additional health and safety inspectors, nearly doubling their ranks. All of those 200 are now on the job.

Our government is working hard to build a culture of prevention in Ontario, and I am proud to say that we're seeing dramatic results. Those dramatic results mean better workplace health and safety, and it is good news for families in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): As perhaps one of the few members, if not the only member, of the assembly who suffered a very serious industrial accident many years ago, I have to emphasize my appreciation of the importance of workplace safety and the involvement of the Ministry of Labour in ensuring that the rules of the province are complied with and that there is indeed a spirit of partnership in working together with both labour and management and the owners of businesses, large and small.

However, I think perhaps the minister is patting himself on the back a little too much in terms of credit for the reduction of workplace accidents over the last two and a half years. I think there has to be, Mr. Speaker, in the minds of most fair-minded people, a correlation between the reduction in workplace accidents and the significant loss of manufacturing jobs in this province. In the past two and a half years, we have witnessed close to 130,000 manufacturing jobs lost, and manufacturing jobs lost equals reduced workplace accidents. That's a reality. I think you could juxtapose those job losses with the numbers which the minister is talking about, and it's not all that much to rave about in terms of accomplishment.

He talks about partnerships, and certainly in the small business community, I am not hearing much in my own riding, my own area, about partnerships; in fact, quite the opposite. There is not an effort to work together with many of the small businesses and those who are facing

real challenges in the economic climate that Ontario is in at the moment. In fact, warnings or working together on a partnership kind of basis is not what we're hearing about back in many of our ridings. The ministry seems to take great glee in every day posting and sending us e-mails with huge fines for small businesses in this province—\$75,000 to a small construction firm, that sort of thing—without any warnings or any advice. Business is having a very difficult time in this province, and this can only work if we do find ways to work together. Certainly, my experiences over the years in manufacturing, as a former union president as well—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): A union boss.

Mr. Runciman: I don't talk about that too often, but this is certainly an area where I have significant experience, and it's unfortunate, I think, the approach this government is taking.

When we look at what's happening in my region of the province, and I'll talk about that specifically in terms of manufacturing job losses, we have 1,200 at Domtar in Cornwall alone; Chesterville losing the Nestlé plant, 300 jobs; Gananoque, in my riding, just announcing the Collins and Aikman plant closing, 125 to 130 jobs; in Prescott, Hathaway shirts—the history of Hathaway shirts in Prescott lost forever under the reign of the McGuinty Liberal government; and most recently, the Hershey plant in Smiths Falls. We know what a significant part of eastern Ontario the Hershey plant is, not just in terms of the 500 jobs, but drawing tourists to our part of the province, 400,000 to 500,000 visitors who annually visit the Hershey plant to watch the chocolate-making operations. It also supplies something significant in terms of a destination market for dairy producers in our part of the province, significant quantities of milk that have been destined for that Hershey plant, and that market is now lost.

Those are the kinds of things that have impacted in terms of the number of injuries, and you can extrapolate this across the province, especially in rural small-city Ontario. The manufacturing sector and the good jobs that go with it are being hollowed out under this government, and they don't seem to have any kind of plan. We've asked them for a plan. They agreed to develop a plan two years ago, and nothing happened. We're still seeing these almost weekly announcements of job losses in the province.

We've proposed a couple of things: an eastern Ontario secretariat, which would give eastern Ontario a window into government, lodged within the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade—absolutely nothing. One of my colleagues has proposed an eastern Ontario prosperity fund. What's happened in regard to that? Absolutely nothing.

We now have legislation before us, Bill 69, which creates a super-inspector. This is the sort of thing where, in terms of co-operation and help in making sure that we do have safe workplace environments in this province, this Liberal government is doing very little indeed.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I can certainly tell you that New Democrats are very concerned about the incidences of injuries in the workplace of workers in this province. We think the government can do a heck of a lot better job. In fact, a number of private members' bills have been put on the agenda here in this House by members of the New Democratic Party caucus.

I'm going to start with the one by my friend and colleague from the Nickel Belt riding. What she has done is put in a bill that talks about the 33,000 needlestick injuries that occur in Ontario on an annual basis. Members of this House know that these injuries are taking place day after day after day in our hospitals and in our health care sector, and each needlestick injury on average costs the health care sector \$2,000 in testing and treatment. That doesn't count any of the costs for the suffering of families or for the health care that's required for those people who are injured after they contract serious disease as a result of these needlestick injuries. The fact of the matter is that people don't need to suffer from needlestick injuries in this day and age, because there are safety-engineered medical devices that reduce the injuries and create a more safe environment for workers in the health care sector. We think this government needs to move on that issue.

People in this Legislature should know that the Toronto East General Hospital did a detailed audit of sharps-related injuries in the workplace and it showed an urgent need for best practices to deal with this serious health and safety issue. As a matter of fact, the statistics show that injuries from sharps were reduced 20% in the first year. They went down to having only eight injuries in 2004—only eight. So not only were these injuries reduced, but so were the costs, of course, for these needlestick injuries.

We know that this government has before it an opportunity, right now, today, to pass the member from Nickel Belt's bill, Bill 30, the Safe Needles Save Lives Act, right now.

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We also know that the member from Niagara Centre has a bill on the table to deal with some of the recommendations from the late Archie Campbell, the judge who gave us the SARS report, talking about masks in the hospital and health care sectors and the fact that we need to equip health care workers with masks to prevent them from contracting communicable diseases.

We also have Bill 45, my own workplace harassment bill, which could help reduce injuries in the workplace from harassment of workers. We also know there is a significant dearth of commitment by this government to even cover workers in Ontario for workers' compensation, for example. Some 30% of workplaces in this province are not even covered by WSIB. This government has the Brock Smith report, which that party when in government produced, that says there is no reason not to make sure that all workers in Ontario are covered by WSIB.

I can continue on. There is a significant request on this minister's plate right now from health and safety activists

around making serious regulation inclusions on repetitive strain injuries or musculoskeletal disorders. This minister knows very well that we need to have real regulations that are really enforceable to prevent musculoskeletal injuries in the workplace. That would be a good step for this minister to take. Instead, what does he do? When workers are injured, he doesn't even appropriately make sure that they're being compensated.

I think about Bill 111 and the firefighters who should be having presumptive legislation for the illnesses and cancers they contract on the job.

For injured workers who are suffering in this province and have been suffering under a reduced income for decades and decades, what do they get? They get crumbs, crumbs, crumbs—crumbs that have a stale date on them, because the crumbs they get only last until 2009 when they have to come begging, cap in hand, once again—one of the things they want to put an end to in this province. But no, this minister gives them a little bit of hope that maybe might get him through the next election, but injured workers know that what they wanted was not delivered by this minister, and there's simply no doubt about it.

The bottom line is this: Yes, New Democrats are pleased when there are initiatives that reduce the number of injuries in the workplace, but you know what? What that minister needs to do is listen, because we just went through a process at committee, and he was told by the Ontario Federation of Labour and other stakeholders that in more than 50% of workplaces in Ontario, joint health and safety committees with trained worker reps don't even exist. So the committees that he is supposed to be in charge of to make sure injuries aren't happening don't even exist. It's unacceptable, and he has a lot of work to do.

VISITORS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I rise on a point of order and ask your indulgence to introduce some very important people who have joined us in the chamber today. These are Dr. Warde and others from the University Health Network, especially representing Princess Margaret Hospital; Dr. Paolo De Paoli from the Centro di Riferimento Oncologico, Aviano, Italy; and Mr. Ezio Beltrame, a representative of the Italian government; and that region's health minister. He is here as well today.

They are here to sign a memorandum of understanding between two great institutions, one in Aviano, Italy, and the other here at Princess Margaret, to co-operate on cancer care research. Two others who have also joined us in the House are Mr. Primo De Luca and Mr. Julian Fantino, both organizers of this great signing today. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to welcome Mr. George

Marcello, who is the founder of the Step by Step Organ Transplant Association. He is joined by his brother Sam Marcello and friends William Adie and Nicolas Severino. They are here to join us for the public hearings on Bill 67 later on this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members, I would like to draw to your attention that today is the last day for this energetic, dedicated, bright group of pages. So let's give them our heartfelt thanks for their service over the past few weeks.

Applause.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I do beg your indulgence. While we're speaking about pages, I just want to point out to you and welcome the parents of page Alyssa Surani, who are joining us today: her father, Nizor Surani, and her mother, Farah Surani; and her brother, Aly Surani.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Welcome, and thank you to the pages.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Legislature heard yesterday about your so-called year-end reinvestment fund which permits you to hand out millions of taxpayers' dollars. The real question with any of these funds when questions are asked here is about accountability. It's our job—all of us here, but the opposition in particular, I think—to ensure that public money is spent with proper controls.

Yesterday you were asked for the application form for this fund so that members generally and members on this side of the House—and the media and the public—could let their constituents know how to apply for funding for this kind of thing, but we haven't yet received it. Are you prepared to table for us in this House this afternoon the application form for the year-end reinvestment fund so that we can all see how that is set up and how people can go about applying?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): During the course of the year, I, along with my staff, am in contact with hundreds of organizations, community organizations right across the province, that are involved in diversity and in multiculturalism. They continually bring forward needs and they try to identify these needs to us. This is an ongoing process that is brought forward to my ministry.

Mr. Tory: This is kind of the point here. The minister has just said that he is in contact with hundreds of groups, and I just counted—because the Premier referred all of us yesterday to the website and we went there—and in fact 31 groups got money. Without calling into question any of those groups or who they are, 31 got money, out of the hundreds that you talked to. What we're really after here is the process pursuant to which you decided how the 31 groups got the money out of the hundreds that you say are in touch with you.

Yesterday in your scrum you were a bit more expansive than you just were here. You basically said:

Step 1: The minister has a meeting with a group that's arranged—in this case, the application that was under discussion yesterday, by a Liberal MP, a former Chrétien cabinet minister.

Step 2, which is quite extraordinary: You get a call from the office of the Minister of Finance to say that they have so much money that they can't possibly spend it all. They've looked after all the kids with autism, all the farmers and all hospital emergency rooms, and they need your help to shovel it out the door.

Step 3: You go to the cheque-printing machine in your office, print off a cheque and hand it out.

If that's the process, then stand up and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The leader of the official opposition knows that there are many demands, that there are many needs throughout Ontario in our diverse communities. He knows that.

Again, the principles are: We want to encourage Ontario's diversity and inclusivity. We want to encourage integration. We want to foster volunteerism and community building. We want to celebrate our culture, our heritage. Those are the principles that we base our decisions on in trying to help many groups. Obviously, we can't help everybody.

Mr. Tory: There is not a member on any side of this House that disagrees with any of that. What we're trying to find out is simply this. We are here as the safeguards, as the trustees, for the taxpayers' money. People worked hard to earn these millions of dollars that you have the responsibility for handing out.

You yourself said this afternoon—you just said—that you have contact with hundreds of groups. I believe that. People call me as well. The problem is, I don't know how to get involved in this process that resulted in 31 of these groups getting this money at the end of the year in a mad rush.

You said yesterday, to the media and others, that there were criteria that had to be met in order to get this money. That sounds reasonable. That sounds as it should be. But when we called your office to ask for a set of the criteria, a piece of paper saying, "How do you get the taxpayers' money? How do you apply?" we were told that you wouldn't give it to us. What we want to know is about basic accountability. Will you give us the list of the criteria by which you decided these groups should get the

money and not all of the other ones? That's all we're asking.

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Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, there are many needs in our diverse communities within our wider volunteer community. We try to ensure that their needs are met. We can't meet them all. But, during the course of the year, many of these outstanding needs are identified to us, to members. If they're identified to members across there, I welcome any member to bring forward an identified need. My door has always been open for that.

We try to do the best we can to invest in those hard-working, community-based organizations that have never been funded for the most part. We are trying to invest in their hard work and in what they've been contributing without help in the past. We try to invest in those excellent, community-based organizations.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: Again to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: The fact is that I think we'd probably all agree that all of these hundreds of groups who approach you are hard-working community organizations that are deserving of some consideration. The question here comes down to just some basic accountability. Those who get the money should probably know on the basis upon which they won. But, probably more importantly, those who didn't get the money should know perhaps why they didn't. More important than all of that, the public should know that you have reasonable procedures and processes in place such that they know how you decided that the 31 got the money and the several hundred others you referred to didn't. It's about basic accountability. Before, it seems, you had seen any form or any paperwork or anything, you have given these people money, by your own admission. It's like they won the lottery before they even bought a ticket.

My question is this: Would you provide this House with a copy of the list of groups who asked for money, the forms that were filled out by those groups and the basis upon which you made your decisions, so everybody can see how people won and how they lost? They're all good groups. We just want—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: It's unfortunate that you characterize this as some kind of winning by these groups. Many of these organizations, like the Afghan Women's Association, have been working diligently, with hardly any resources, serving battered refugee women who are here, and they have approached governments of all stripes for help. We have given them some help. That's the kind of organization we help. We think they're deserving, they're hard-working and they're serving a very needy community in Ontario. Women who have come from Afghanistan are trying to make a living here.

Mr. Tory: You are missing the point. Everybody in this House, without exception, agrees, I'm sure, that the Afghan women are working hard and are deserving of support. But you're implying by that very answer that all

of the other hundreds of groups—you said today it was hundreds of groups who've asked you for money—obviously aren't as deserving. So all we're saying is, could you help us by showing the taxpayers and showing us—especially in light of the fact that one of the groups that got money has a lot of ties to the Liberal Party—the basis upon which you picked the 31 groups? You're saying there were criteria. Yesterday you implied there were forms that were filled out. There was a process that people went through. We're just asking, on behalf of the taxpayers who have the right to see how their money was spent, that you show us the forms, show us the process and explain to us how you made the decision, because we're talking about millions of taxpayers' dollars and a lot of people who didn't get the money who would like to know why. Would you share that information with us so we can see that it was dealt with fairly, appropriately and responsibly?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, these are organizations that help to meet newcomer needs, that are culturally inclusive. These are organizations that foster community building, volunteerism and cultural integration. These are the principles that we base our assessment on. There are many deserving organizations. They come to all ministers; they come to you. We do our best to try to meet some of these identified needs when we can.

Mr. Tory: The minister says he does his best at picking. Yesterday, when he was talking about what his best was, he said that the reason there is no list, the reason there is no process, the reason they got a cheque, in some cases it seems, before they even asked for one, is because there isn't time to do all that because it's the end of the year and the Minister of Finance has said, "Let's blow as many millions out the door as we can before the end of the year." God forbid that you might actually take some care in how you spend the money.

What we're trying to get at here is that if it isn't the real answer that there isn't time and you just rushed it out the door based on whomever—you picked the names out of a hat or you picked the ones you thought in your own mind were best—just tell us that. All we're trying to get at is, when it involves millions of taxpayers' dollars, the taxpayers have the right to expect better than for you to say that either there isn't time to be careful or you just didn't do anything to be careful. Please tell us what process you followed. Please show us the paperwork so we can see how you decided. It's millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. Will you please tell us how you decided?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, over the months and years, many organizations, many community advocates cry out for help from our government. They have never had resources from any level of government, and they are associated with many of our hard-working newcomer communities that have been ignored. What we try to do is help them, based perhaps on an organization that is identified as being in one of the 13 communities that are high-risk, where there's a lot of concentration of newcomers, where there's a need to invest in those areas in

the GTA or maybe in Windsor, where there are newcomers. Those are the basic principles we work on. They don't come all at once; they've been ongoing demands. Some have never been listened to for months or years. We try to listen to them.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Yesterday, we heard about how you gave a huge sum of cash to a Liberal-friendly organization with no due diligence, no process, no criteria, no way other groups could apply, no transparency and no accountability. Today, we learn that when it comes to this kind of shady Liberal behaviour, the Bangladeshi community is not the only victim.

Minister, can you tell this House why, 13 months ago you, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, gave \$200,000 to an organization registered as an animal protection agency?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I'm not sure what the member is referring to, but again, we are constantly trying to help all communities if they're in need, if they meet the diversity necessity, if they meet the volunteer component—building in communities. Those are the kinds of needs we try to assess.

Mr. Prue: Minister, let me refresh your memory. On March 26, 2006, the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre received \$200,000 from your Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to supposedly help new Canadians. We checked with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency today and found out that this group registered as a charity on March 1, 2006, just three weeks before you cut the cheque. What's worse, the group wasn't registered to help new Canadians; it was registered as an animal protection agency. And what's worse is that if you look for an actual community centre, you'll be disappointed, because the address on the registration form is the office of one David Farmani, president, Richmond Hill provincial Liberals. Explain that.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are hard-working newcomers to Canada from Iran. A growing number of immigrants are coming from Iran and settling in Ontario. We are trying to do our best to ensure that those Iranians who have come to Ontario are given the support they need to feel welcome and integrated in Ontario—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I can't hear the response. Minister, is your response finished?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Final supplementary.

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Mr. Prue: Iranian-Canadians don't buy this. They are outraged that you denied respected, long-standing, active cultural groups that serve new Canadians the chance to access these funds. Instead, you cut a cheque to an animal protection group that registered as a charity just

three weeks before you cut the cheque. The prime contact of that protection agency is the president of the Richmond Hill Liberal association, and on that board of directors is none other than your Liberal-nominated candidate for the upcoming election in that riding.

Minister, can you tell us what this group did with the \$200,000 you gave them 13 months ago?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, there is a growing number of Iranians coming to Ontario who are looking for help from government so that they can help settle the newcomers and they can give them counselling services. This is an organization that is attempting to do that in order to integrate the Iranian Canadians who are coming here. We are trying to help them to do this.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Prue: Again, back to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: Mr. Minister, most cultural organizations try, but, by your own admission, don't get support from your ministry. But here is one that did: the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre. It was registered as a charity three weeks before it got the money.

People in the community say they've never heard of it. Its charitable purposes are confined and registered as protecting animals. Its head is the president of the Richmond Hill Liberal association. Your provincial candidate is on the board. No matter: Three weeks later, you cut them a cheque for \$200,000. Meanwhile, non-partisan Iranian-Canadian organizations that have existed for decades get nothing, no funding at all. Why does your government believe that political affinity should be a factor in deciding who receives this money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In every community, whether it's newcomer or non-newcomer, there are a number of community-based groups. They are all working hard to try and represent their community, and we can all appreciate that. There are always differences of opinion on which group is better or bigger than the other. We tried to help a group that was trying to build a centre to provide services to Canadians who have arrived here recently from Iran.

Mr. Prue: Every year, cultural organizations struggle to find the funds they need to keep their doors open, including the established ones, and to serve the needs of recent immigrants. They get little or nothing from your government. Organizations that are non-Liberal or just non-political are blacklisted or ignored, while Liberal-friendly ones get money without the trouble of an application form, due diligence, due process, transparency or accountability.

If you have nothing to hide, will you table the ministry memos and criteria that were used to grant this and every other application? Will you table them and show us exactly what they applied for and what animals they were going to protect?

Hon. Mr. Colle: You can dismiss one group by saying it's not the major group in a newcomer community and you can assess one against the other. We know there is need in the newcomer communities, like the Iranian community. There is a great need because the number of Iranians coming here is accelerating. It's one of the

fastest-growing immigrant groups. We try to invest and support that need in the newcomer community based on helping them to integrate and achieve inclusion. That's what we tried to do by helping that organization.

Mr. Prue: I consider your actions disgraceful, I have to tell you. But the Auditor General disagrees with what you're doing as well, and I'd like to quote the auditor. He says, "Normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated to ensure the transfers would qualify for immediate expensing." That's what he's saying about your government. That is exactly what you did.

We have organizations that seem to exist only on paper getting six-figure grants—ones that are just set up so that you will fund them. No one in the community they service has ever heard of them—I gave you one yesterday; I'm giving you another one today—but they all have ties to your party. We know that. One of these groups has the same contact as the Liberal Party association in Richmond Hill.

Minister, we need you to clear the air. Are you going to clear the air, or are you going to continue saying the kind of gobbledygook you're giving us here today?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Our government is very proud of the fact that after 20 years, when no one ever stood up and spoke up for immigrants, we did. For 20 years—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: We have to hear the response. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: For 20 years, if an immigrant came to Ontario they received only \$800 in funding. If an immigrant went to Quebec, they received almost \$4,000. Premier McGuinty and our government stood up and said, "You have to invest in our newcomers and ensure that they get the services they deserve." We fought for that. That money is now flowing into Ontario for the first time in 20 years.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Premier. Let's for the moment leave the Liberal connections out of this but look at what we have here, which is an organization that, according to the legal registrations, is registered on the books as some sort of animal help group. No one seems to have heard of them. There's a big difference between that and some of these very well known organizations that are on this list. But no one has heard of them.

The minister earlier said that there were hundreds of groups who asked him for money. The question we've got here is, this creates a very bad odour with the public who look at a group that is called an animal help group, and yet we're told the money went to help immigrants. No one knows why they applied. No one knows what criteria were applied to giving them the money, and frankly, no one seems to know what happened with the money once they had it.

So all we're asking for is the paperwork—the application form, the process that was gone through to give these people the money—so the taxpayers will know that just a little bit of respect was being shown to their money. Would you help us and ask the minister to table

the documents that relate to this Iranian group, that's registered as an animal help group, getting this taxpayers' money, so we can all see that there's nothing wrong, if there isn't?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Finance can speak to this.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Yes, I do live in Richmond Hill. Perhaps much more importantly, I'll tell my friend the Leader of the Opposition that like many, many culture groups, I know this group and I know the work that they've been doing for 20 years, particularly assisting new arrivals from Iran, often political refugees settling in this country. My understanding of this group—like so many other small emerging groups with newcomers in Ontario—is their major objective is to assist their fellow nationals in settling in this country. To the extent that this government can help that happen, we should be very proud of that, sir.

Mr. Tory: Even the Minister of Finance, who I would have thought would understand better than his leader, better than his minister, about accountability, doesn't understand. The appearance here—I frankly don't know enough about this group to know if whether what you said is true in terms of the time frame, or in terms of the work they do. I don't know; I'll admit that.

But I do say that when it comes to the taxpayers' money, you of all people, and the Premier sitting next to you, have a responsibility to be able to show the public that this money was well spent, that this group is in fact what everybody says it is. You do surely understand that when the president of the Liberal association has his residence shown as their head office, when the candidate for the Liberal association is on the board and when the registration of the organization shows it has to do with animal help, there may be just a few people out there who will have some questions.

So all we're asking is, show us the documentation that accompanied the decision to give these people hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money. It's not Monopoly money; it's the taxpayers' money, and they have the right to know what you did with it.

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Hon. Mr. Sorbara: When it comes to newcomers to this province, assistance in settlement, assistance in English as a second language, assistance in job training and assistance in simply adjusting to the realities of a new life in a much different culture sometimes falls upon the shoulders of community leaders who take it upon themselves to form organizations to deliver these services.

I remember when I was a kid my mom worked with the Italian Immigrant Aid Society, and her job was to welcome new arrivals. And you know what? At that time, if the Conservative government had given a few dollars to the Italian Immigrant Aid Society, it would have made the work that my mom did a little bit easier. I'm proud of

the way in which we are helping newcomers drive deep roots into this great Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, I meet regularly with ethno-cultural groups from my community: Turkish, Pakistani, Iranian, Sudanese, Somali, Afro-Canadian-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and many, many others. All of them are frustrated by the lack of funding help for their organizations from the McGuinty government, but now their frustration will be outrage because you had millions of dollars to give away without notifying anyone of a program or public process for applying for these funds.

Minister, why didn't you make our Hamilton ethno-cultural groups—and I mean all of them—aware that you had millions of dollars available for groups like them?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I'm surprised that the member for Hamilton East doesn't reflect on the fact that after 15 years of hardly any investment in Hamilton immigrant aid societies, we were the first government to invest in the largest, most comprehensive organization, one of the finest organizations in Canada: SISO in Hamilton. We not only gave them a capital grant of \$500,000 so that they can house homeless refugees in Hamilton East, we also ensured that their grants from the federal government have increased by over 40%. That's what we've done in Hamilton.

Ms. Horwath: I certainly do know that SISO got some funding. The problem is, they haven't figured out—they told me that it came from this year's budget, when in fact it's on your list for last year. So you decide which slush fund you took it out of, because nobody really knows at this point. Nonetheless, I recently had the legislative library—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister. Member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Horwath: Recently, because I'm meeting with all these groups, I had the opportunity to ask the legislative library to give me a list of sources so I could go to this group and say, "Here's where you go for funding from your government, the government of Ontario." The library's research paper shows that as of March 30, 2007, the program that you say your groups used to access these millions of dollars did not exist. You must have invented the program and put it on your website after we found out about your slushgate scandal. When you doled out exclusive financial largess by the truckloads to your friends, you discriminated against every other cultural group in Ontario by not giving them a fair chance—

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is the perfect example where she's objecting to this first-time investment in SISO, which is one of Canada's finest organizations—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton East.

Hon. Mr. Colle: —that has been desperately looking for an investment to build this refuge for refugees that

come to Hamilton. It's the first time all organizations of Hamilton have had a 30% to 40% increase in funding, and you are saying this doesn't meet your purposes—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister. The member for Hamilton East will come to order, or you may not be here for the rest of the afternoon.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, it's just shocking that the member from Hamilton East—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: It's just shocking. One member says this group shouldn't get the money. She says they don't deserve the money, that others should get it. The obvious thing is that there's an organization in Hamilton which is the most prestigious and they have received capital funding that they have never received before from their government or that government. SISO is finally getting the resources they deserve.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, when we use the term "safe schools," we're talking about learning environments that are safe for students physically, emotionally and psychologically. We know that bullying can take its toll in all three areas. We understand the best way to handle bullying is to prevent it from happening in the first place.

With that in mind, you and the member from Guelph-Wellington recently announced changes to the Safe Schools Act. The members opposite didn't get it right when they introduced the so-called zero tolerance policy. In fact, their leader and members of their caucus have admitted the programs we're talking about introducing are absolutely necessary. Once again with respect to education, we are fixing something that had gone terribly wrong.

Minister, can you advise us of what are the proposed amendments and how they will help keep our kids from being bullied?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you, to the member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, and especially to the member for Guelph-Wellington for her work on this file.

Applause.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Yes. Join in.

Bullying is the number one concern we hear from parents when they talk to us about safety in our schools. That's why, if the legislation is passed, the safe-schools provisions of the Education Act will be amended so that, for the first time, educators can deal with bullying directly. Bullying will be included as an infraction for which suspension must be considered. This has been a serious gap in the safe-schools legislation up until now.

It's also important that we're replacing mandatory suspension—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: —except in the most serious cases and mandatory expulsions with the requirement that principals and boards consider and respond to all infractions that occur in the most appropriate way for that infraction.

Mr. Arthurs: Thank you, Minister. This issue is certainly important to my constituents and those throughout Ontario. We must reduce bullying-related activity and behaviour within our schools, and it will please them to know that the proposed legislation will help to serve that exact purpose. Our government understands that safe schools are a prerequisite for student achievement. If we want more students succeeding at the provincial standards for reading, writing and math, as well as raising the graduation rate, we must ensure a safe learning environment for them.

In addition to adding bullying as an infraction to the Safe Schools Act, I understand that we have a comprehensive bullying prevention strategy in our schools. Minister, what else is being done to keep our kids safe in a safe learning environment?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: The changes to the legislation that we've brought forward are just part of a much broader strategy, as the member has said. We have invested \$7.83 million into schools for bullying prevention programs. That's \$1,500 per elementary school and \$2,000 per secondary school. We've established a three-year, \$3-million partnership with Kids Help Phone, and some of the work that's been done on that is already coming forward. This will double the 24-hour helpline's capacity to provide counselling to students in Ontario. This will benefit 30,000 more students each year.

We have provided training for 7,450 principals and vice-principals on bullying prevention. Beginning in 2007-08, training on bullying prevention will be delivered in partnership with the Ontario Teachers' Federation, and that means 25,000 teachers will be trained.

This change to the legislation is part of a programmatic approach to making sure that bullying is understood in our schools and that our teachers can prevent it and respond to it appropriately.

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MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I hope the Premier will answer this question, because ultimately he is the Premier of Ontario and the person ultimately in charge of stewarding and looking after the taxpayers' money.

Now, the federal government, for example, has a program called the human rights program, and if you go to the website, they have a list of the criteria pursuant to which you can get money or not get money. There are questions on it that you have to answer, like: Are there

similar projects being done by others? Will the project become self-sustaining? Has this group received funding from the human rights program before? Did they demonstrate results from the activities funded?

Surely the Premier will understand that the point everybody is trying to make today is that there's a group here that got a lot of taxpayers' money—\$250,000 is a lot of money. They got the money, but apparently it's the case that they got it without filling out any papers or answering any questions. If you were to say today, "Yes, we will simply produce the paperwork, show the application that was filled out, tell you the process that was followed in giving them the money," then no one would have any questions left, I'm sure. But will you agree that we should see those papers and understand what that process is? Don't you think that's the minimum that should be expected?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I believe that the leader of the official opposition is asking about the group known as COSTI. I want to tell him a little bit about that. COSTI annually serves a total of 42,000 individuals from a very diverse population. They have, among their funders, Prime Minister Harper's government, the United Way, the Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund, the Raptors Foundation, the Maytree Foundation and the CHUM Charitable Foundation. COSTI's staff speak over 60 languages. They have provided supports along the lines of English as a second language; they've provided housing help; they've provided counselling and mental health services; they've provided help with interpretation and advocacy and with finding employment.

The leader of the official opposition may feel that that group in particular is not worthy of continuing its work, but we strongly differ in that regard.

Mr. Tory: I really think it's unfortunate that the Premier would—I suggested no such thing. What I asked you was very—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: What I asked you was very simple, and it actually has to do with this Iranian-Canadian Community Centre, which has on its board your candidate in Richmond Hill and has as its address the president of your riding association in Richmond Hill. All I said was: Don't you think it is reasonable, when these people receive hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money, that the taxpayers—and you, for that matter—should have a reasonable stream of paperwork to back up who they are, what they're going to do with the money, some measurement of what they in fact did with the money, and so on? That's all I asked you. I didn't call into question anybody's bona fides. I just said: Don't you think it's reasonable, when it involves hundreds of thousands of dollars that people work hard to earn and send you in trust, that you should be able to show us how you decided to spend it and what you did with it? Do you think that is a reasonable request?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to remind the leader of the official opposition that the single most important thing that Ontarians ought to recall when it comes to their treatment of immigrants in Ontario is that that particular subject matter was found under the crime section of their platform. That's where it was found.

We have a different view of immigrants and immigration in the province of Ontario. We think it's one of the single most important defining characteristics of our province. They reject it, they fear it and they criminalize it. We embrace it, we understand it enriches us socially and economically, and we will continue to support immigration services throughout the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is heckling and he's not in his seat: both mistakes.

The member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding is home to Oromo Canadian Community Association, a well-respected organization that assists newcomers and promotes cultural awareness among the greater Toronto area's 7,000-strong Oromo-Canadian community. The association has recently embarked upon an ambitious plan for a cultural and community centre. Minister, can you explain to this House why this organization, which has devoted the better part of two decades to helping new Canadians, cannot get funding, yet a three-week-old organization, the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre, can get that funding?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): It's unfortunate the member puts one newcomer group against the other.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is why we try to do the best we can, because they are all deserving. I hope the member will bring forward the request and the need from the organization. I'll be more than glad to do what I can, because I know your riding is one of the areas that needs settlement service support and needs that kind of investment wholeheartedly. That's why we've invested a lot of our resources into that part of the GTA with the Jamaican Canadian Association, the Midaynta association. We are trying to reach that area because there are needs there. I don't deny that.

Mr. Ferreira: Minister, we've asked repeatedly for an application process, for application forms, for some kind of transparency. It seems quite clear to me that a number of these so-called grants are little more than Liberal political pork-barrelling. It's time for your government to get out of the trough, Minister, and give us the whole hog on this. Will you table in this House, will you prove that the Iranian-Canadian cultural centre has done good deeds for the money that you gave to them? Will you table the proof?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said to the member, we realize your area is not unlike the western part of my area; it's a high-need area. That's why we invested \$200,000 in the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples in your riding. That's why we've helped establish another service provider in your area. The St. Clair West Services for Seniors is now in your riding. They've just been established with the help of my ministry. We're trying to do the best we can to provide services that your government and that government ignored for two decades.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of Culture. Minister, first of all, thank you for coming to Port Hope a couple of weeks ago to visit the beautiful Capitol Theatre. But this month the Ontario Trillium Foundation announced its latest successful grant application. In this latest round, several community organizations in my riding, including the Northumberland Children's Services Committee and the Northumberland YMCA, received a great deal of support, from which my constituents will benefit greatly. This assistance is always celebrated in my riding, but I know we are not the only community that's so fortunate.

Minister, can you please tell this House a bit more about the Trillium Foundation and how it is improving the lives of Ontarians in every corner of the province?

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): First of all, I want to thank the member for the question, and I'm certainly happy to share with this House some of the great news about the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

I know that this agency of the Ministry of Culture is a favourite of all members in this House. The \$100 million in grants that this organization distributes to over 1,500 local organizations across Ontario has reaped a great deal of benefit for millions of people across this province. These grants, no matter what the size, have huge impacts on many people. Each one of us in this House has seen the amazing results delivered in arts and culture, environment, sports and recreation, and human and social services groups in our communities. I am proud of the work and I thank the hundreds of volunteers that are at the heart—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary.

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. I am also very proud that our government, through the Trillium Foundation, is able to make a real difference in people's lives. I wholeheartedly agree that even smaller grants can have a great impact in communities. This is why I'm very hopeful that our strong support for the foundation continues well into the future.

Minister, can you please tell us what this government is doing to ensure that the Trillium Foundation has a bright future?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: One of the issues that Trillium faced is that there are always many more applications than can be accommodated, and I'm pleased to say that

our 2007-08 budget proposes to increase the organization's annual funding to \$120 million over the next three years. That's a 20% increase, and this would allow the foundation to reach many more grassroots groups and remain a positive force in this province for years to come. I would urge all members to give their full support to the budget moving forward so that we can make this happen.

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MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'd like to ask a question of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration again.

We've just been hearing a lot about the Trillium Foundation. The Trillium Foundation, which does wonderful work, has a very rigorous application form. In fact, there were people who have told me it takes a long time to make an application, in terms of all the paperwork that has to be filled out.

We have other programs. I mentioned the human rights program earlier. We have Arts Presentation Canada administered by Canadian Heritage. They have a deadline. There's a program overview, there are stated eligibility criteria, there's an assessment process. So anybody knows they can apply, and they all know what questions they have to answer in order to get the money.

What we're really after here is just trying to determine, whether it has to do with the Iranian-Canadian society or the other one that was mentioned yesterday, that there is some reasonable process in place that safeguards the taxpayers' money, that makes it fair for all the people who want to participate, so they all know they're on a level playing field. It means we don't have to really worry about questions of optics involving Liberals or anybody else, because everybody went through the same process, everybody—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question's been asked. Minister?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I have help from the table with the clock. When I call "question," it gives you 10 seconds. If you don't finish in that 10 seconds, I move to the next. It's as simple as that. Shorten your questions. It works.

Minister?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The leader of the official opposition has raised a good point. On our website we have our most comprehensive program, which gives out aid to over 80 newcomer settlement agencies across the province. On there, we have our introduction, application eligibility criteria, organizational assessment criteria, activities funded, eligible expenditures. This is a starting point for a lot of newcomer organizations.

During the course of the months that we're being contacted by many newcomer organizations or many diversity institutes, they are also asking us for investments in

their cultural museum, perhaps a piece, or there are other organizations asking to build a new centre. We get those identified and we also try to see if we can—

The Deputy Speaker: The response has been given. Thank you.

Mr. Tory: What we're asking for here, when you talk about that, is simply to see what those criteria were. Yesterday, the Premier referred us to the website, and there is what you print off: You print off simply a list of those who received the money.

We're simply asking, what were the criteria pursuant to which these 31 groups got the taxpayers' money—lots of it—and how did you decide on those 31, versus the hundreds that you said were in the category that they were? And they go to your website and they start, as you said. We're simply trying to figure out how you decide between the 31 groups and all of the other groups so that we will know—and more importantly so that the taxpayers will know—that it was done fairly, that everybody had a fair chance and that the taxpayers' money was spent wisely.

Why don't you just table whatever correspondence you had with the two groups that have been discussed yesterday and today? Agree to table it, and we'll all have a look at it. If it's all there and we know what the questions were, terrific. Please just table it so we can all see that it's transparent and that everything was above board.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, the basic principles that we used are for organizations that are going to help in including the newcomer communities, enhancing diversity, promoting volunteer engagement, espousing heritage preservation; these are the principles we base that on. These organizations, again, are constantly asking for help, because there are many needs out there. We try to see, if possible, if there's a point in time when we can.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, as you are well aware, I have a broad range of ethnic groups in my riding: Pakistani, Gujarati, Chinese

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

Minister, obviously you've been able to distribute several million dollars to a variety of worthy groups. I'd like to know what method you used to inform the ethnocultural groups in my riding that they could apply for these funds. How did you let them know that the opportunity was there?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we already have organizations in many parts of Ontario that are applying for funding under our newcomer settlement program. They know that we fund these programs. We've also made them all aware of the fact that now there are enhanced grants available through the ISAP program, through the host program, through the community workers in schools

program, through our federal agreement. We made them all aware of that.

We also are in contact with many groups as they are in contact with my office, with the ministry, where they advocate for greater capital expenditures or a major project. We also try to see if we can help them with those.

Mr. Tabuns: I find it interesting. Here's the Ontario Arts Council list of deadlines and categories. I have to tell you, Minister, that in my riding groups have been asking about potential for funding and, like my colleague from Hamilton East, I've been curious about what's available and what's not. Would you table any documents, letters, web pages or advertisements that your ministry used to inform ethnic groups in my riding that they could apply for funds that you've so recently disbursed?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Just to remind the member, one example in your own riding is the Hellenic Greek Centre, which was based originally in your riding and for 20 years has tried to get resources to build a new centre. Over the years, they've applied to many governments. They've all refused to help them. We have given the Hellenic centre \$1 million so they can build their centre, which many of the Greeks in your riding will benefit from.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Small and medium-sized businesses make up about 99% of the businesses in Ontario and they account for more than 50% of Ontario's jobs. In May 2006, our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, created the first-ever ministry dedicated to small business and entrepreneurs in this province.

Across the province, including in my riding of Stoney Creek, there are many hard-working small business owners who contribute so much to our local communities. I had the opportunity to have a round table with those who are in my riding. I was talking to them about the things that we could do as a government to help make their lives better and give them the opportunity to access government services more readily, because essentially, through their creative thinking and their hard work, they are contributing to innovation, investment and job creation. I shared some of those with the minister, and I just want him to describe for us some of the things that his ministry is now doing.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): First of all, I want to thank the member from Stoney Creek for asking this question. Let me tell you what we are doing for small business. We have about 44 enterprise centres. We have nine satellite centres. In addition to that, the ministry provides very useful service to whosoever wants to open or start a business or promote a business.

In addition, we are moving very aggressively to reduce the paperwork burden for small businesses and we are also helping them to facilitate how to sell it to governments. In addition, we are also bundling the rules and regulations by sector so that small businesses can move ahead and do their business in a more effective manner. We are creating the right environment for small businesses to succeed.

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Ms. Mossop: During the conversations I was having with the members of my community—there was a wide range of them there; we had quite small ones with actually only one person and then larger businesses with dozens of people working for them—one of the things that came through is that more and more businesses are changing and people are doing things very differently. They're having to be very creative and they're trying to make the best of all resources. Some people just work strictly from their homes now. Many people are doing that more and more, in part or in whole, conducting their business from their homes, and they really rely on their computers, on the Internet and websites, for information. They find it more time-effective if they can do that than getting on the phone and trying to navigate their way. So what is it that you're doing in that area to make it easier for our businesses to access government services in a timely way through the World Wide Web?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me thank the member for Stoney Creek again for asking this question. What we have done: I went around and did consultations with small businesses. We found out that we needed to provide them with information in a one-stop fashion. So what we have done is we have developed a website that provides very comprehensive information about how to start a business, how to promote your business, what kinds of resources you have available to you and where you can go and get the financing. In addition to that, what was important was that people wanted to know what are some of the government programs that are available to small businesses. So what we have done is that we have put a complete, comprehensive directory of all businesses from various ministries on one website so that people can access it. I would like to take this opportunity to tell the audience that the website address is www.sbe.gov.on.ca.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. With respect to the grant that was under discussion yesterday, the \$250,000 grant, you were questioned about this. We've had a lot of talk today about the process and about the criteria and about application forms and so on. Yesterday you had a discussion with the media, and they were asking you a number of questions and you said, "It was a general conversation at first, and later on we asked them to put something together to see if it would meet our needs for my ministry's proposal." Then they asked

you a question, "What is the criteria?" and there was a second question, "Is it written down?" and your answer was, "Yeah, I've got it."

So all we're after today is, if you've got it, then we're saying, could you please share with us what the proposal was in writing. We'll see from that, I guess, what your requirements were in terms of what they had to submit to you to get \$250,000 of the taxpayers' money. If they're doing a lot of good work, and if you exercised a lot of diligence in deciding to give it to them, then just give us the documentation and we can see.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Again, this comes back to the involvement of COSTI. COSTI has been in operation to help newcomers for 54 years. They have partnered with the Bengali cultural association to ensure that this group gets support from an established organization like COSTI and is meeting the needs of establishing a newcomer outreach settlement program in this high-needs area of the city of Toronto that has been identified by the United Way. That's what we based our principles on. It's a high-needs area, many immigrants, there's a dearth of services, and you've got a formidable established organization like COSTI partnering to ensure that these services get delivered.

Mr. Tory: We've got the 31 groups here that the Premier referred us to yesterday. He said that all the information was on the web site. Indeed the information is here, but who got the money? Of these 31 who are listed here, can you tell us—it's a fairly straightforward answer—is there material on the file where each of these people made an application pursuant to some process? If so, can you tell us what the process was and how everybody in the world knew about it except these 31 groups—the hundreds that you talked about? Was there a judging panel or some other kind of evaluation process?

I think these are reasonable questions to be asked when we are dealing with \$20,295,000 of the taxpayers' money. That's all we're after. How did you decide these 31 people got the money? If there are written proposals, would you be kind enough to table them in this Legislature so the public, the media and ourselves can all see how you decided to give the money out? It's a very fair question. That's what we're here to do: to oversee how the taxpayers' money is spent and make sure you have proper accountability. Will you table the documents? Do they exist?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member is free, under freedom of information, to ask for those requests. We'll waive the fee—we have to go through protocol to make sure it's done properly. But the main thing is that these organizations are hard-working, grassroots, for the most part, well-established in many communities. Again, many of them are small, some of them are well-established, but they are all trying to meet the needs of newcomers. That's what they're trying to do. They're trying to ensure there's inclusion—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Colle: He's not listening anyway.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. By refusing to act and be forthright here in this place, people are going to get the wrong idea. They're going to start referring to you and this whole process as Colle-gate. Is that what you want? You, as the minister, and your government—every single one of those ministers—have a responsibility. You all took an oath when you took office that each of you would act in the best interests of the people of this province. You took that oath. Can you tell me now, having taken that oath, how you are acting in the best interests of the people of this province by denying access to the information and the criteria, by denying access to the program, by denying access to the applications and by denying access to the results you received? How are you acting in the best interests of the people of this province?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We have made it very clear that we, as a government, are committed to ensuring that the inclusion of all Ontarians is a priority. We have gone forward trying to ensure that these hard-working organizations all across the province that have been working with no help—

Interjection: Neglected.

Hon. Mr. Colle: —and neglected for 20 years, get a lifeline so that they can help newcomers and contribute to Ontario's future. That's what we are committed to, clearly, and we're doing that right across Ontario. Where for 20 years your government ignored them, and so did the Conservative government, we are investing in our newcomers so we can invest in a better Ontario.

VISITORS

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to bring to the attention of the House that in the west members' gallery I have a delegation from the University of Calabria in Italy, and we have Dr. Marchese with the group.

PETITIONS

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition regarding lab services at the Muskoka Algonquin hospital, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

“Whereas MAHC has indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive

\$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the impact of such decisions would negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie.”

I support this petition.

1510

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that is signed by 81 residents of northwestern Ontario, Dryden in particular, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

“Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

I agree with these petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Recently, I've had the pleasure to meet with the staff and members of the families in Community Nursing Home, Port Perry, and I'd mention their names: Heather Cooper; Karen Sansom, the activity director; John Dodds, the president of the residents council; Liz Hobson, chair of the family council; Eric Timms; Mrs. Murdock; Mary Malloy; and Perry Grandel. They presented me with the following petition, which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'm pleased to present this to Sarah and sign it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

COURT SUPPORT STAFF

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition that was given to me by Lynn Thompson, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 1,400 members of the Attorney General's court support staff who are working under the flexible, part-time FPT model, otherwise referred to as appendix 32 under a collective agreement between Management Board of Cabinet, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union negotiated in the spring of 2005, are working hundreds of hours per week in the service of the Attorney General for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas under the FPT agreement many court support staff are working as many as 20 hours or more per week for which payment is being withheld and will not be paid until months later; and

"Whereas when the makeup pay does eventually get paid, up to 50% may be lost to taxes because of the taxation year into which the payment may fall; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff who are being forced to work under these conditions are single mothers with fixed living expenses, who incur employment-related expenses such as child care and travel costs for those hours that they are

required to work but for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas in many cases these expenses are impossible to pay without the offsetting income which is being withheld by the Attorney General under the FPT agreement; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff have been left no other choice but to resign from these impossible working conditions and, in many cases, are being forced onto the welfare rolls by the very government for which they are providing hundreds of hours of work for which they are not being paid in a timely manner; and

"Whereas the FPT agreement which is causing such hardship for employees of the Attorney General was negotiated by and entered into between the Ministry of the Attorney General, Management Board of Cabinet and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union; and

"Whereas the employees to whom this agreement applies insist that the terms of the agreement and their practical implications were not fully disclosed to them at the time the agreement was proposed for ratification; and

"Whereas these employees affected by this agreement have repeatedly appealed to OPSEU, the Attorney General and the Premier to point out the unfairness of being forced to work hundreds of hours without being paid for that work and the hardship this practice is causing in the lives of many employees; and

"Whereas repeated appeals to the Attorney General and to the Premier that they step in to ensure fair treatment of Attorney General employees are being ignored;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the Premier, the Attorney General and the chair of the management of cabinet to take whatever steps are necessary to change the offensive provisions of the FPT agreement as set out in appendix 32 and ensure that the Attorney General's court support staff receive fair treatment as employees of the government and that among other unfair provisions of the agreement, the practice of withholding pay for hours worked cease immediately."

I send this to the table by way of page Jenalle.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas York region and the city of Toronto have witnessed a substantial increase in traffic gridlock over the last several years; and

"Whereas these two regions continue to face traffic gridlock, which is an overwhelming economic and environmental problem; and

"Whereas we are significantly disappointed with the position of the leader of the NDP who wants to cancel the Spadina-York subway extension;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all York region and Toronto MPPs do their utmost to have the Spadina-York subway extension construction start during the year 2007."

I support this petition, and I affix my signature to it and ask Katrina to deliver it.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): This pertains to my motion that was defeated this morning—lots of money for slush funds, but no money for babies and mothers in Alliston.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I agree with that petition and I have signed it.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been sent to me by Richard Harman of Ottawa. It's regarding funding for children and youth who need mental health services, specifically referencing the need for core services to receive secure funding and an implementation plan to be developed and funded and that the Ontario ministries of education and health join with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to support this framework and its implementation. They say:

"We, the undersigned, urge each of the political parties in Ontario to commit their support for the aforementioned three steps in order to begin implementing A Shared Responsibility: Ontario's Policy Framework for Child and Youth Mental Health, for the benefit of all children and youth in Ontario."

I have affixed my signature to it.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to regulate zoos to protect the animals and communities.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Jacob.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I present this petition to the Parliament of Ontario, reading as follows:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I am pleased to affix my signature, as I am the honoured sponsor of that bill.

1520

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by people from Toronto and it reads as follows:

"Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

"Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

"Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario's working families earn a living wage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP's living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour."

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this, and I'm going to ask my daughter, page Sarah Hampton, to bring it to the table.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I present a petition on behalf of the health community in the Durham region—it's very important—on behalf of Jerry Ouellette, the member from Oshawa, and Christine Elliott, the member from Whitby-Ajax. We worked hard on this campaign. It's a petition re cuts to Lakeridge Health. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—Minister George Smitherman—"has directed Lakeridge Health to cut mental health and addiction services and children's mental health services in order to balance the Lakeridge Health budget; and

"Whereas the ministry has directed these cuts, bypassing the Central East Local Health Integration Network, whose director has stated 'there will be no reduction in mental health and addiction services within the Central East LHIN'; and

"Whereas these cuts will likely transfer costs rather than save them, putting additional pressure on Lakeridge's emergency department, Durham police, Whitby Mental Health," and social services provided within the community; and

"Whereas the Central East already receives amongst the lowest per capita hospital funding" in the entire province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to revisit this" poor "decision and ensure Durham residents receive appropriate support for adults and children who need treatment for mental health" and other addiction services.

On behalf of the residents of Durham, I am pleased to present this petition to Alanna and sign this for the House.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It's always my favourite time, to rise pursuant to standing order 55, because I want to give the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, April 23, in the afternoon, we have second reading of Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act.

I understand that there is discussion amongst the House leaders and the rest of the week is to be determined.

I would ask page Craig to come over and give this to the table, as brief as it was.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER ROADS FOR A SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 VISANT À CRÉER DES ROUTES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS SÛR

Mrs. Cansfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa—Orléans, my parliamentary assistant.

I rise in the House today to begin debate on a piece of legislation that, if passed, would save lives in Ontario and on Ontario's roads.

Since our government took office nearly four years ago, the McGuinty government has worked tirelessly with our road safety partners to improve safety on Ontario's roads. Ontario enjoys a reputation as a leader in road safety across North America, a fact that everyone here can be proud of. Despite this achievement, however, more remains to be done. It's sobering to consider that more than two people are killed and 10 seriously injured every day on our roads.

With our government's bill, we are raising the bar and we are setting an even higher standard for road safety in Ontario. We are targeting aggressive and dangerous driving behaviours such as drinking and driving and street racing.

Approximately one quarter of all fatalities on Ontario's roads involve drinking drivers. Each year, about 16,000 people are convicted of drinking and driving in Ontario, or approximately two people each hour, each and every day.

People who drink and drive put all of our lives at risk. In 2004 alone, drinking and driving collisions claimed 192 lives in Ontario. We cannot allow this to continue.

As Premier McGuinty said last week, "[T]here can be no tolerance in Ontario for people who put other people's lives at risk on our roads.... if you drink and drive or if you street race, you'll pay and the penalty will be tough," and we all agree on that.

Ontario's prevention strategies need to be strengthened to target high-risk drivers and first-time and repeat

offenders. This proposed approach includes civil and criminal measures that could mean repeat drinking and driving offenders would forfeit their vehicles under the Attorney General's innovative Civil Remedies Act. Anyone caught driving with a blood alcohol concentration of between .05 and .08 would face tough sanctions that will get even stiffer for repeat incidents. Roadside driver's licence suspensions would range from three days for a first reading of between .05 and .08 blood alcohol content to seven days for a second infraction, and 30 days for a third or subsequent incident.

The second time someone is caught, they'll have to complete an education program. If they're caught again, they'll have to install an ignition interlock device in their vehicle for six months, in addition to the mandatory education.

Make no mistake: We're getting even tougher on people who drink and drive. And that's not all.

Since 1999, 35 people have lost their lives to street racing in Ontario, with innocent people often the victims of these pointless races. This legislation would also crack down on street racers who choose to race on Ontario's roads, and everyone who's standing in this House should applaud this new initiative.

This legislation would give law enforcement people the power to suspend the driver's licences and impound the vehicles of drivers involved in street racing and stunt driving. Police would have the power to issue an immediate roadside seven-day driver's licence suspension and a seven-day vehicle impoundment for street racing or participating in a driving contest or stunt driving.

It would also increase the minimum fine from \$200 to \$2,000 and increase the maximum fine from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Our street racing fines would be the highest in Canada and worth every penny if they saved more lives.

Police officers will have the tools they need to stop these behaviours, and it will offer further protection to them personally in the line of duty. It's sobering to consider the fact that more police officers are killed at roadside than during any other activity.

1530

That's why we're proposing to allow police vehicles to display flashing blue lights in addition to the red lights they already use. This change would improve a police vehicle's visibility, which is critical to the officers' safety, especially at night. This would help to protect the police while they're doing their job protecting us.

I also want to emphasize that injury prevention is a driving force behind this legislation. The senseless acts of street racing and impaired driving exact a terrible toll on people in this province, and we as a government need to do all we can to prevent these tragedies from occurring.

I'm proud of what our government has accomplished so far. This legislation, if passed, would build upon the road safety improvements made under the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act of 2005. That fine piece of legislation resulted in tougher sanctions for driving offences at school crossings, as well as for motorists who

don't yield for pedestrians at crosswalks and traffic signals. It also toughened the sanctions for those who drive at excessive speeds with no serious regard for human life.

Bill 203 will build on what we've already achieved, advancing this government's commitment to improve road safety. I'm pleased to report that many from across Ontario are very supportive of our proposed legislation. From OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino: "I'm pleased to see the government is strengthening the laws and increasing fines and suspensions for those convicted of driving offences."

Chatham-Kent police officer Carl Herder says, "I welcome any legislation that will provide police with new tools that will make our streets safer."

The Hamilton Spectator wrote, "Legislation to toughen the penalties for those who risk the lives of others through their lethal driving is a good thing."

Lastly, Brian Patterson, president of the Ontario Safety League, has told us, "These are good recommendations. They're solid and they're going to save lives."

When we introduced this legislation, even the official opposition understood that it was the right thing to do. The member for Oak Ridges said, "I appreciate your initiative in bringing this forward. I trust that we'll see speedy passage of this bill."

Everyone agrees. With this bill, the McGuinty government is setting the stage to ensure that Ontario remains a leader in road safety. That is why I urge all members to give this legislation their enthusiastic support. I thank them, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): This worthwhile package of legislative measures proposed by the Minister of Transportation will, if enacted, save lives. As the minister said, despite Ontario's role as a leader in road safety, we must do more. If passed, the bill would improve safety by keeping drinking drivers and those who street race off Ontario roads.

Almost half of the fatal collisions on our roads are tied to speeding or loss of control. These senseless crashes are preventable, especially in the case of street racers. We want to get street racers off our streets as quickly as possible by giving police the power to issue an immediate roadside driver's licence suspension and seven-day vehicle impoundment if you are caught street-racing, participating in a driving contest or stunt driving.

We cannot bring back the 35 people whose lives have been lost to street racing since 1999, but this bill would take action to deter and hopefully prevent these kinds of tragedies from happening again. That is why this bill is so important. We need to make our roads safer for everyone—for the people who use them, and especially for the women and men who risk their lives to patrol them, our police.

Our government asked them what they thought would help to keep them safe. They told us that the ability to use a combination of flashing blue and red lights would increase their visibility, especially at night, reducing the

chances that they could be involved in a roadside fatality and help protect them while they are protecting us.

One of the things our police forces do across Ontario is help to catch and stop impaired drivers. As the minister noted, one quarter of all fatalities on Ontario's roads involve drinking drivers. That is simply unacceptable.

We want to protect Ontarians from drinking drivers. Drivers who repeatedly blow in the 0.05 to 0.08 BAC range would face increasingly severe treatment. If someone's caught drinking and driving and doesn't learn their lesson the first time, our proposals teach impaired drivers the severity of their actions while protecting innocent, law-abiding people. For those who are repeatedly convicted of a Criminal Code impaired driving offence, they would face the possibility of having their car ordered forfeited by the courts under the provisions of the proposed legislation.

The fact is, motor vehicle collisions exact a huge toll on Ontario, both in terms of lives lost and the massive economic costs. Indeed, motor vehicle collisions cost Ontarians \$9.1 billion annually in social and health care costs.

I know that the members of the official opposition and the third party are very supportive of any measures that would further protect the lives of Ontario's citizens. This bill is exactly that kind of measure. With everyone's help, we can ensure the fast passage of this legislation. We can give the police the tools they need to stop street racers. We can prevent injury through reduced collisions and better visibility for police officers, and we can send repeat drunk drivers a strong message: If you can't stop drinking and driving, you can have your car ordered forfeited by the courts.

I call on my colleagues in this House to support this legislation and urge its speedy passage. Let's work together to make safer roads for a safer Ontario a reality.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I want to put people on notice that I will be responding to the minister as critic. I appreciate that the remarks she's made pretty much recognize that this bill was a long time coming and is probably the right thing to do.

I will make a few remarks on behalf of John Tory, the Leader of the Opposition, because he always wants to do the right thing. I suspect that that's the kind of tone we're looking for in this House: most importantly, to make our roads safer.

I see the former Minister of Transportation here as well, which is reassuring. I'm sure that he as well would like to be remembered as doing the right thing.

I'm surprised, as I'll say in my remarks, that it wasn't done sooner, but hopefully there would be hearings on this bill as well to make improvements and to seek further consultation with stakeholders, whether it's on the enforcement side or the after-market side of parts in this issue of street racing specifically.

Again, with that being said, I would suspect that our position would be realizing that there are always improvements that could be made in any legislation. But

in the interests of safety and the protection of the people of Ontario, I'd like to put a few things on the record in my time that will be next, I hope. I'll have an hour to speak about this and many other things.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): I appreciate that there are elements of this bill that I think will be useful. I don't think there's anyone in this Legislature or anyone in this society who thinks we should deal with drunk driving in any way other than fairly sternly.

There's no question that the deaths that result from drunk driving and the deaths that result from street racing are unnecessary, tragic deaths and ones that we should be taking every opportunity to avoid, to ensure conditions are there that people don't find themselves or their families subjected to these tragedies.

That being said, in the course of reading preparing for this debate, it became clear to me that the law, although useful, is useful only in the larger context of action being taken on social problems and addiction problems that I hope the minister will address as we go through this process, because there's no question that it makes sense to take someone who's drunk off the road. Certainly, when I had a chance to go through the literature, one of the things that turned up in research is that the development of Alcoholics Anonymous in a number of American jurisdictions is correlated with a reduction in drunk driving. So in fact taking action in not so much the Ministry of Transportation jurisdiction but possibly that of the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education, taking action to stop addiction in our society, is as valuable as, and possibly more valuable than, punitive laws. I'm not saying they're not necessary; I'm just saying there are other techniques and approaches that may be more useful and may get us to the conclusion we want more expeditiously.

Certainly there are some changes in here related to emergency lighting that frankly don't need to be debated. They're straightforward and commonsensical. Let's get on with those.

1540

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I just want to commend the Minister of Transportation and the parliamentary assistant, the member from Orléans, who have been very strong advocates over the last number of years, promoting road safety in Ontario and making our roads safer for all of us who use them.

I'm reminded: You hear the radio commercial for RADD, Recording Artists Against Drinking and Driving, saying that not only are you loaded but you're a loaded weapon. I think this legislation that would introduce new measures to seize and forfeit the vehicles of repeat drunk drivers is an excellent step. You can't get into your vehicle and drive drunk. It has, potentially, very serious consequences of an individual being seriously hurt or, in fact, death. I think this legislation, which clamps down on drinking drivers, is the appropriate way to go.

It also provides additional protection for our police officers who are out there, particularly in bad weather when they're doing the RIDE program, using blue and

red flashing lights on their vehicles, a colour combination that will enhance the visibility of these police vehicles. We can't do enough for the brave souls in Ontario who wear a uniform, whether it's a police officer, a firefighter or a paramedic. We have to do everything we can to enhance their safety as they're out there doing good things on our behalf, in particular the OPP or our local police forces who are protecting our safety. As I said, I commend the minister and the parliamentary assistant for being such strong advocates for road safety in Ontario. This legislation is timely, and I hope members of the opposition will see fit to support it as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation in response.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'm very grateful to the members from Durham, from Toronto-Danforth and from Peterborough for their comments.

One of the reasons we took the time that was required to bring forth this piece of legislation was that we wanted to ensure we had the opportunity to talk to the people who are involved. Whether they were the families of the victims, which we did in Sudbury—we also put together a round table where we brought all the impacted and affected people together on how we could move forward. I did, in fact, invite the member from Oak Ridges to participate in that forum. What we want to be able to do is ensure that what we've done is the right thing.

I couldn't agree more with the member from Toronto-Danforth. The issue of behaviour is fundamental, and that's why you heard in my remarks that education is pivotal to how we move forward—changing behaviour. That's why we move down to .05 to .08—in the warm range, and we're saying these are repeat offenders. We need to get to them. We need to get to their behaviour.

We know that if you drink and drive and we take your car, you can't drink and drive because you have no car. It's really quite simple. But having said that, we need to get to the root cause of why it's happening in the first place, and that's the behaviour. So the education component is mandatory. They must participate on the second and third offences. We're saying, "We'll work with you." Interlock in the third offence, but education is definitely mandatory in the second and third.

But overall, we have a broader issue around injury prevention that we need to deal with in all of these—I don't call them accidents; there's no such thing. It's a collision, it's a crash, and 99% of the time it's preventable. Again, how do we put in place the punitive measures we need to because we can't get to those who, for some reason or another, are not prepared to listen? Get them off the roads. But we can, in fact, educate others to ensure that they drive safely.

I look forward to the debate in the House, and I'm very grateful for the support we've received already from all members for this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: I was hoping there would be someone here to share my time with, but it seems they'll be watching this and getting copies of Hansard, as well as watching it on TV, I'm sure, in their office.

It's always important to recognize at the outset that all of us in this House, I can safely assume, would be in support of measures to make our streets safer for pedestrians and for citizens at large, wherever they may be.

I think this bill does do some things. In fact, the title of the bill is—the troubling part here is a couple of things. Our job as critic is to be pointing out the shortfalls, potentially, the expedited route that they're looking for. I'm just going to put a little setting around this.

I see Mr. Rinaldi is now in the chair. It's a good place to keep order in the House here.

I would say this was introduced on April 12, as the minister has said. Here it is April 19, and I'm in hopes that the House will take time to fully examine the six different sections of the bill. I want to say at the outset that we should consult with the public on some of them, with the stakeholders, whether it's Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League, or indeed the CAA, obviously, the OPP and the road builders themselves. In fact, I would say consultations would probably be important for no other reason than educating the public and bringing them into this change.

There are some significant features in this bill which probably will end up being challenged in the courts. That's not to say we don't support the bill; we just want to make sure there is a clear understanding as you build consensus moving forward.

Again, it's always important as well to put a little history around the genesis of legislation. It's my experience, in the 12 or so years that I've been here, and in the previous 10 years municipally and on a school board, that from concept to legislation and regulation—and you would know, Mr. Speaker, as a former mayor of Brighton—is probably 10 years. It is a tragedy, how long it takes. There are always issues. We heard recently here—not new—the tragic incident of the school bus safety issue, with the seat belts. I'm hearing from not just the School Bus Operators' Association of Ontario, but the bus drivers themselves called my riding with liability issues. They are doing those important tasks of transporting students. Our most valuable resource or asset in this world is our children, yet there is no clear answer. It's kind of thrown over the fence to the federal government, which sets the standards for school bus design and construction.

That's not being critical. That question has been raised by the senior citizens of Ontario. They are worried about the motor coach industry and whether or not there should be seat belts there. There was an incident I think near Mississauga about a year and a half ago. The alliance of senior citizens of Ontario has a campaign now. I've visited with them and I've heard various concerns on that.

Going back further in the history to get to the genesis of this thing, a bill, almost completely replicated in Bill

203, was really brought about by a tragic incident, and this is a sad reality. You would have to say, if you look at the history, that 38 people have been killed in street racing incidents in the greater Toronto area since 1999, so it's important that action be taken. It's 2007. You can do the math. It's pretty near a decade from the observation to the implementation. We're at this point, at this late date in the mandate, and the McGuinty government, which is now under pressure for lotteries, for the potential misuse of over \$20 million of hard-earned taxpayer money by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, may get deflected from completing this agenda.

But in fairness, even there, I'll tell you that in 2003 the Minister of Transportation, Frank Klees, introduced a bill that died on the order paper, almost the same bill, really. The bill was then reintroduced—I think it was Bill 122—on June 7, 2006.

1550

Frank Klees, who was the former Minister of Transportation, I might add, introduced the same bill because he's passionate about this. He introduced the bill; in fact, I believe the minister recognized that in both the day she introduced the legislation and some media event, some photo-op thing. I respect her for doing that because Mr. Klees, as the former minister, has done a lot of work, and she's now charged with carrying that forward.

But you know, you look back to these motives. People would like to remember Andrea Seggie, whose 21-year-old son, Matthew Power, was tragically struck and killed on November 6 of that year. She led a 470-kilometres march to Parliament Hill from Brantford to raise public awareness on the need for tougher laws.

The minister is trying to complete what started in 2003 and 2006, and 2007 now, to send a strong message that street racing will not be tolerated. I can honestly say in a non-partisan way I'm sure almost every member in the House here, if any exceptions, would be supportive of that initiative. It is hard to use the time to be super critical in any way directly on this particular legislation.

Speaker, I know you operate a speedway, a raceway. Is that not right? I'm sure you'd be familiar with, if there is the appropriate equipment, training and rules of the activity, there might be some need for young people who want to be competitive and want the skill of driving—there needs to be the proper environment. But certainly all of us agree it is not in the streets. You do see it. You see it performed—I commute from Durham every day, and it is almost two hours each way, Mr. Speaker. It's tragic. I know you come from down that area. It's a long drive each day both ways. I might spend three to four hours a day in my car, and how this affects me is, I watch people multi-tasking all the time.

You probably know—many people still call me. I've had a couple of bills on road safety myself. The one that probably gets the most attention is the use of cell phones. I used to see people chatting and kind of not really paying attention. I spoke to Gwen Boniface, who I think was the chief of the OPP at the time. Fantino was in fact the can the chief of police of the city of Toronto. I have a

letter from him supporting my initiative prior to introducing that bill the first time.

It has been in here three times. I know Kevin Flynn from the Liberal Party, the member from Oakville, has introduced a bill which is part of my bill. It is not the whole bill, it is part of it. It's one piece. In fact, I supported that bill. I just had an e-mail the other day thanking me for working collaboratively with the government member, which is really the right thing. Most people find, as we are in this, that it's important to keep track of doing the right thing, not the right political thing, and that's really the point that's being made here.

But I think in memory of her son, we, as legislators, are slow to pick up the challenge. But Frank Klees, the member from Oak Ridges, is very commenting and collaborative with the minister. I have his press release here, issued that same day. It says, "Frank Klees, member from Oak Ridges, welcomes the McGuinty government's announcement that it would be introducing legislation to get tough on street racing. Klees has called for legislation to empower frontline police officers to issue on-the-spot licence suspensions and vehicle impoundment ever since constituents Rob and Lisa Manchester were killed as the result of a street racing incident in ... 2006."

This affects families. I could probably even stop now and if the minister had thoroughly researched Frank Klees's bill, the member from Oak Ridges, we could probably pass this thing. This is one thing that we should learn how to do here, because it's giving the police the right tools, it's giving the right signal to the citizenry at large using our public roadways that driving is a right, an endowment of having a proper licence, training and licence registration on the vehicle. It's a privilege, quite frankly; not a right, at the pleasure of the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Klees goes on to say, "In making the announcement, Premier McGuinty acknowledged the efforts by Klees on the street racing issue and his influence in shaping the government's legislation." It's a very commendable thing for the Premier to say. "I want to thank Frank and ... acknowledge the leadership role he has assumed. He has taken a keen and active interest in this, he has put forward some very positive proposals," said Premier McGuinty. "I want you to know, Frank, that you have had an influence for good on the policy that we are announcing today and I thank you for that."

It's good to hear there is positive collaboration by all parties on issues like this that clearly can prevent deaths—as I said, I think 38 deaths since 1999.

Also, if you quickly scan the media on that—it's important to put this stuff on the record—Murray Campbell, a respected writer with the *Globe and Mail*, says, "The Ontario government will unveil today tougher new measures to curb street racing that will allow police to impound the cars and suspend the drivers' licences of anyone caught participating in the activity."

"Premier Dalton McGuinty will join Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield this morning at a safety education centre in Stouffville to announce the crackdown."

I remember seeing the photo op on TV. It was a very cold, miserable day, actually, so better her than me—I mean, the weather.

“Government sources say that, under the proposed amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, drivers caught racing on public streets by police would have their licences and vehicles taken away on the spot for seven days.”

I could go on. If you actually look at the legislation itself, the legislation is quite specific and quite progressive. There is provision in the first schedule on impaired driving, but I want to go to section 172, the prohibition on street racing: “The current penalty for street racing is a \$200 minimum and \$1,000 maximum fine or six months imprisonment, or both a fine and imprisonment, and a maximum driver’s licence suspension of two years.”

So let’s not think for a moment that the police don’t have some tools. I’ve just explained to you that that’s currently section 172. What changes here is: “The fine is increased to a \$2,000 minimum,” where it was \$200, with a maximum fine of \$10,000.

If you take a young person whose car is their pride and joy and all that stuff—if they have good parents and good community-responsible awareness, they’d need to go to Mr. Rinaldi’s track or something to race. They shouldn’t be doing it on the street, for sure. You’ll see a lot of them modifying their vehicle, putting a fancy tailpipe on it or other such things. I guess they’ve got to know there’s a limit to having their car looking smart and then trying to do unsafe things that endanger others. If the car gets impounded—it may be their only possession, and they probably owe a great deal on the financing of the vehicle, and then \$10,000; they might be 20-something years old. I don’t know. I think there may be discussion around the issue of a deterrent that doesn’t put them into bankruptcy before they even get their first job. Do you understand?

I agree with the suspension because, as I said, it’s a privilege to drive, not a right, and that privilege could be removed by society. I would support tough enforcement. There is a due process to lay a charge and then have that conviction upheld in a court or some kind of traffic act panel that could review that. That’s one thing we would probably hear. The discretion of the court to levy a significant fine of \$10,000—I don’t know. This could sound a bit partisan here, but every time I think of Liberal government, they sort of like to tax you to death and then spend you to death. That’s the general, overall conclusion, if you look at the budget. Spending is increased to \$90 billion in the Ontario budget, up \$22 billion. I ask my constituents when they call—you get the same calls, I’m sure, and not in any partisan way: “I can’t find a doctor,” or “I waited six hours in emergency,” or “The streets are plugged; there’s gridlock,” or “My son just got laid off from Dura Automotive.”

They’ve spent \$22 billion, and we still have gridlock. We have insufficient transit. The Greater Toronto Transportation Authority still isn’t up and running. They’ve spent millions of dollars—billions of dollars. I ask con-

stituents and I ask you: Is it any better? Do you feel that any of the priority services that you want in your community are any better?

1600

In fact, it’s quite sad today. We had two bills, one from the member from Burlington. The member from Burlington had a private member’s bill. The private member’s bill this morning, or ballot item number 79, was Ms. Savoline’s, “that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately identify Burlington’s Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital for inclusion on the ministry’s capital projects priorities list...” The people have raised \$40 million in Burlington, and they need this hospital renewal project. That was one of the items debated in private members’ business this morning.

The other one was ballot item number 1, a private member’s notice of motion by Mr. Jim Wilson from Simcoe-Grey. Here’s his notice of motion: “that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal government should provide Stevenson Memorial Hospital with the required \$1.4 million”—that’s like one hour of interest on the provincial debt—“in new funding over the next three years so that it can reopen its birthing unit and ensure that enough obstetricians and health care providers can be recruited to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in New Tecumseth ... and Essa” in the region of his riding of Simcoe-Grey. Not very much money. It is surprising. It was a very close vote. I think it was 18 to 17. The Minister of Health, Mr. Smitherman, came in, and he was the deciding vote. They defeated both motions—small requests for communities. What kind of signal does that send to young people when we can’t agree on the number one priority—in the context of street racing and the Highway Traffic Act, that this House can’t operate co-operatively?

I’m trying to make a point here. Quite frankly, I’m saying here on behalf of John Tory and the Conservative Party of Ontario that I would support it. I would like to think that we could look at such things as the fine. We could hear from the professionals, the police. I see that there’s a section here dealing with conducting reviews.

“Section 62,” which was mentioned by the minister in her remarks this afternoon, “restricts the use of different coloured lights to various classes of vehicles. Currently, flashing red lights are permitted to a number of classes of vehicles (eg. police department vehicles, ambulances) listed in subsection 62(15) and green flashing lights are permitted to firefighters only. The section is amended as follows: to allow that further classes of vehicles, to be prescribed by the regulations, may use red flashing lights; to give police department vehicles the exclusive right to use red and blue flashing lights; and to allow volunteer medical responders, to be prescribed by the regulations, to use green flashing lights.”

This was quite a subtle amendment. When you have volunteer fire departments in communities like my riding of Durham—for instance, Scugog and Port Perry have, for the most part, volunteer firefighters. They’re re-

sponding as volunteers, driving their own vehicles to the station so they can be dispatched to the site of that home or business that could be in peril. So it's making sure that the public is aware of what those lights are that are flashing behind you, whether it's a snowplow, an ambulance, a police car and such. I think this section is mechanical. I suppose the associations of firefighters and police and the chiefs of police have worked this out with the ministry, and the ministry is just fixing up the regulations.

There are other sections of this bill that are quite interesting. I went through primarily the preamble, the explanatory sections. It's not a huge bill. The Highway Traffic Act itself is quite, quite large. This just amends some sections. This is actually 13 or 14 pages, two languages, probably seven pages in length in small print. These are under the themes of "expanded application of the act" and "miscellaneous matters."

A new section, subsection 1(8), "is enacted to clarify that suspensions and impoundments for a period of days are counted by including" each 24-hour period.

"Section 4.1 is added to permit the ministry to do things electronically and in electronic format and to permit persons dealing with the ministry to do things electronically," which is fine. It's just more expeditious for either the lawyer or the licensing office to file certain papers.

"Section 5 currently provides for regulations prescribing miscellaneous fees."

Now, here we get into it. There's an inordinate amount of fees, if you get into this bill in any detail. I'm just trying to lead you through.

The fines have moved from \$200 to \$2,000 and from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Now we get into the fees section.

It says, "Clause 5(1)(d) is for administrative fees for the reinstatement of licences."

So, if a young person has lost their licence, there's probably a retraining period required, which is additional.

"This is amended to allow for conditions and circumstances to attach to any exemption from the payment of these fees. New clause 5(1)(i) is added to permit regulations that impose consequences in regard to licences, permits and number plates for failure to pay a fee or penalty or for a dishonoured payment"—in other words, failure to pay or an NSF cheque.

There are a number of other sections. I was quite surprised, actually. It's plain that the ministry people and the legal staff have done a pretty good job.

A new section of part III is added to the act:

"This part provides for the Superior Court of Justice, in a proceeding commenced by the Attorney General, to make an order forfeiting a vehicle (which is defined to include a motorized snow vehicle)"—so if you read the act, you'd think it's the Highway Traffic Act, but in fact it involves almost every vehicle, as described in the regulations—"to the crown in right of Ontario if the court finds that the vehicle was or is likely to be used to engage in certain unlawful activity and is owned or is in the care, control or possession of a person whose driver's licence

has been suspended under the Highway Traffic Act for certain unlawful activity two or more times in the preceding 10 years. The unlawful activity (defined in this part as 'vehicular unlawful activity') is an impaired driving offence or other prescribed offence under the Criminal Code (Canada) or an offence of driving with a suspended driver's licence or other prescribed offences under the Highway Traffic Act."

It goes on to say that there are indeed parts here where they can actually sell the vehicle, and they can actually use the money to compensate a victim of some act.

It's those kinds of details that I think make it worthy. It's a very important and necessary change, but let's get it right so we don't have to be back here in our term of government. On October 10, 2007, there will be a provincial election, and if we're in government, we'll probably look closer at this than they've allowed time for.

Even today you see that sometimes they're trying to rush some money out just prior to the election day.

One of the main questions was for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mr. Colle. There were some questions raised about the process by which some \$20 million was released.

It just demonstrates that haste makes waste. That's an old saying. I think here's a case where they have a bit of a slush fund here, they threw the ball over to the minister, and it seems that there's no process to access the funds. At least, these are the questions that have been raised, and they have been questioned, but there are no answers. It's sort of like the Lottogate thing: Minister Caplan and his experience with 140-plus questions and zero answers. That isn't a good climate for the people of Ontario whom each of us is elected to serve.

So I'd just like to think that in this matter, under the important Highway Traffic Act provisions, there are changes made.

If I go on and talk at any length—and there's very little time to respond here today to this bill—the work that has gone on, as I said before, was introduced in 2003.

I've mentioned the seatbelt issue on buses. I've got some input here on that particular issue for the minister—because the ministers, current and past, are still here, which is a good sign on a Thursday afternoon.

This is from Rob Ferguson of the Toronto Star. It goes on to talk about the incident: "The Canada Safety Council said no changes are needed because school buses are designed with 37 built-in safety systems, including small windows to keep children inside and padded seatbacks to cushion impact during crashes."

1610

I think what's happened here is that many years ago, when these regulations came into force, perhaps there weren't as many vehicles or school buses or as many children, and certainly not as many school trips. Going on 400-series highways, we now see the speeds on those highways, Mr. Speaker, which is certainly an issue of the day. You and I are familiar that if you're going 110 you get run over. So enforcement—Chief Fantino's talking

about that a lot—but the speed basically is 110 to 120 on the 400 and 401 highways. Whether that's right or wrong, that's the reality. With school buses maybe those kinds of impacts in the little lab that you see—you know, running up against a bumper there—I'm not sure these replicate the kind of situations we see here.

On the other side, one of the issues I found interesting was the tragic loss of a life just has to be avoided at any expense. I guess there's some conversations about the seat belt and some kind of fire or other incident in the vehicle where if they had to get out hurriedly, if someone couldn't release the seat belt, a small child, perhaps junior kindergarten age or whatever, could be trapped.

So there are balances to all the discussions here on road safety and on the seat belt issue. Even if I look around, in that ministry there are a number of very important files. The member from Kawartha-Haliburton, Ms. Scott, has a bill on the 105 kilometres per hour for transports on our provincial highways—another controversial issue.

I ask myself, and yeah, I think it would be important to have the speed limiters. I've talked to Mr. Bradley from the Ontario Trucking Association and others—some independents and some who work for larger companies—who are in a just-in-time environment, where truck shipping and gridlock and all these things are important. It's all part of the cost of inventory, whether it's on the road or in the plant.

What's important here is for the minister to set a tone on that bill and relate it to the economic arguments as well as the public safety arguments around it. I think there could be work done on that file and I don't see a lot going on. There's been talk about it several times, but nothing introduced just yet. I think that Ms. Scott has done a fair amount of work on that, and the trucking association. That's an important bill.

The irony of it is—it's funny, the speed that I see on the highways is 100. It's 100 kilometres. How are they going to make a bill that says it's okay to go 105? It's not consistent with the posted speed. Where's the consistency? This is what the problem is. It's not being well managed, not to cast aspersions or criticisms. It is either posted or it isn't. If there's this discretionary Never-Never Land between 100 and 120—Mr. Speaker, you would recall: no you wouldn't, you weren't here. We tried and had discussions. Mr. McNeely, you would know, as an engineer and probably involved in these kinds of things. Experts told us—the engineers, probably civil and mechanical engineers. I suppose—the designed structure was supposed to be, I think, 110 kilometres. That all got screwed up when they went from the old speed system of 100 miles an hour to 100 kilometres, and of course it's 60 to 100. With that conversion, the actual posted speed I think got reduced. At that time, the argument for reducing speed in the States and other jurisdictions was to actually save gas, to be better for the environment.

That discussion needs to be held. Before we go about willy-nilly changing the speed for school buses, changing

and restricting the transportation industry, or designing these new HOV lanes—how are they policed, what's the speed? I should say here that I have two suggestions on the HOV—high-occupancy vehicle—lanes. First, they were designed by the Ministry of Transportation people looking at other jurisdictions. Frank Klees allotted the capital for them when he was Minister of Transportation. Minister Takhar, when he was minister—he's here and he's shaking his head—completed it. That's fine, he was there. That's good, because it shows that governments can work together. It's unfortunate we're not still on that side, but that's a whole different debate.

If you look at that again, on the HOV lanes, I have a suggestion, if the minister's listening. I'm offering it up free. It's just the right thing to do. I would allow any vehicle that's using renewable fuels or forms other than the traditional combustion engine to use the HOV lane. It won't cost you a cent. It will give them an incentive to use an alternative-fuel vehicle. It makes sense to me. As a matter of fact, it makes sense in California, where they're already doing it. These are the kinds of debates that we should have here, and we should move on with them and forget the political football stuff. I think there are good members on all sides and there are good ideas on all sides.

I guess on that transportation file—hey, there are a lot more issues. When you talk about seat belts on school buses, how about motor coaches? You know what I mean? What's good for one is good for all, I suppose. Those are debates that should be held. Being government is about making tough decisions. I look at that file, Mr. Speaker—it's good to see the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford back in the chair—and you could spend a lot of money on that transportation file. Let me assure you, there is very little money provincially unless you raise the tax or cut services. Health is going to suck up 50 cents on every dollar now, or more. So if you want to spend in transportation, you're going to find two things challenging you on that file.

If you look at the Places to Grow document, the whole deal there is intensification. That's more people living in condos—that's the quick interpretation on that—and everybody taking the TTC. That's basically what that is. It's Smart Growth or everybody living on top of each other. That's it. That's how it's going. I think there are probably some options there, but they're going to be expensive options.

Here's the point I'm making: Transit works with density. It's like motherhood; I can't say anything against transit. I take GO Transit. Not every day—this morning I spoke in Scarborough so I had to drive to Scarborough. Because if I wanted to get to Scarborough, I'd have taken the GO train and then figured out what bus to take from the Greenwood station. It's not convenient for people who aren't on a regular route. When I come to Toronto by the GO train and the TTC or walk up from Union Station, that's kind of routine, and in the morning people like things to be predictable. The last thing we need is unreliable transit service.

At the same time, I was speaking to people today at the interfaith community group at noon—they were from Uxbridge—and they were saying, “We don’t have any transit up there.” And I said, “Well, there’s nobody living there—very many people, anyway.” Transit functions when you have density. In my riding of Durham, there’s Durham transit, the integrated transit system in Durham—

Interjection.

Mr. O’Toole: Yes, they’re working hard. They just got 25 new buses, and that’s good. Here’s the deal: That money actually came from our government.

Interjection.

Mr. O’Toole: No, it’s a fact. I wouldn’t say it, Mr. Rinaldi. That money came from a budget; I can show you the number and the capital allocation in the estimates. It’s important. When you’ve been here 12 years, you learn how to follow the numbers through for your own riding. You’ll learn after your second term.

But my point is this, quite frankly—it’s not to be smug or arrogant; sometimes you hear that. The issue that I wanted to point out is the appropriate time and the appropriate resources are what are missing. A bit of common sense: For instance, I live in an area just outside of town. It’s sort of in the country a bit. Now, the funny thing is, there’s a concession road just before I get off the paved part of road, and this municipal bus, I’ve taken it four times—drives down a country road. The only thing it’s going by is sheep. It goes by a sheep farm. There’s nobody on that bus. It makes a big loop. Not to be humorous, Mr. Speaker, because I know you’re paying attention, but the thing is, I think the sheep’s wool is turning a bit yellowish from the diesel fuel that’s spewing out the smokestack. I didn’t say I was opposed to transit; in fact, I would say I’m in favour of transit. But look, you can’t drive a \$250,000 bus—if you’re going to operate it seven days a week, 24 hours a day, that’s five people driving a \$250,000 bus, plus the fuel, and nobody on it. I say to the people of Ontario, watch, and call your MPP, or whomever, regardless of what party. They need to know that, and they need to know your view. At the same time, we need to make sure there is transit that is reliable, predictable and regular enough to address the capacity issues in the urban areas. Carpooling to those areas where transit is developed is the way to go.

1620

Further advice on the transit file—I say this because the two ministers are here—I think there was an effort to move the GO train east. We need it, because there are over 500,000 people. The minister was there one time, when the low-floor buses were introduced in Oshawa, and I appreciate the time that I was there with him.

Here’s the deal: The plan was to bring the GO train to the north side of the 401, around Oshawa—very expensive. It didn’t happen at the Stevenson Road interchange—too much money involved. The next one is going to be maybe down at the GM headquarters building just a little further east, because they’re going to do the south Courtice development there and there will be an

interchange there someday—probably part of the 407, kind of deal. I’d leave it on the south side of the 401. With your Greenbelt plan and the Places to Grow plan, you should run the linear GO system all the way potentially to Belleville or Kingston, connecting those nodal communities along its way, east-west. North-south should be handled by an independent north-south connection. It could be bus, depending on the volume and density of traffic from Peterborough, the city of Kawartha Lakes, Port Perry, Uxbridge—wherever. They could be connected linear north-south in a more flexible mode, working with both GO rolling stock like buses or local transit coordination. If that applies to my riding in Durham, it certainly applies to other parts heading west out toward Halton and other areas.

I know that transit is a huge amount of money, and I certainly support the initiatives on light rail. But when I look at the reports on light rail, we’re not talking millions, we’re talking billions. This is huge, and then the issue has to be where the Places to Grow document is so important about the future planning direction about where’s the growth? What’s missing is the democracy of it all. People are leapfrogging now. The real growth has moved over—Cobourg is growing, and Port Hope; people make choices.

We can’t have everything, when you look at the priorities: health care, child poverty that was discussed today, and other priorities. Municipalities benefit from transit, and it might be argued that we all benefit from the environmental improvements that occur, but they’ve got to find a method. I think the province should be involved on the capital side. If there’s no fare box money, maybe they’d support the fare box part of the revenue rather than fix potholes. The GO Transit part today—about 12% of the fare box revenue is from the province; I think it’s something like that.

I would say that there’s a lot more to be done on that file, and I don’t see much being said about it—a lot of photo ops pushing electric lawn mowers around or something.

Another issue that’s pressing us, and it has a lot to do with this issue under the Highway Traffic Act amendments, Bill 203—which again we’re supporting. Mr. Speaker, just to keep you included here—is gridlock. It’s not just overt street racing—many times it’s young people with fancy cars, but not all the time. I see it manifested in road rage. These are people who have cars capable of fairly aggressive speeds. For instance, if a driver is coming down from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and they’re late for a meeting—there is a speed limit, and no one should be exempt from speed limits; that’s for sure.

I know the member—what’s Mr. Yakabuski’s riding?—drives a lot too.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. O’Toole: Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, that’s it.

The point is, we shouldn’t characterize it as all young people. I see it daily: people leapfrogging and jiggling in

and out. I think that my idea, suggested here—and this, quite frankly, is coming, whether I say it or not. I just read Transport 2000 and some of the literature on the file. Quite interesting. The former minister knows because he is a technical person. It's called ITS. Now, write that down because it's going to be here shortly. It is here now, actually.

It's intelligent transportation systems. This is a way of managing volume traffic. It could easily be explained by—Mr. Speaker, you may use the 407 at times. I don't; it's too expensive. But I didn't promise to roll back the tolls either. I just use the alternate route. But the 407, if you have a transponder—guess what?—it's wireless communication. That transponder can be used to regulate the speed of a vehicle. There are all kinds of applications. It could also read traffic signals ahead. It could close merge and exit lanes to keep the steady flow of traffic capacity, using the current design capacity of a stretch by closing ramps electronically.

I don't see much imagination on this file. They've done a lot of things. Actually, Frank Klees did a lot of things; they're just finishing the work. I think it's important that Frank get back as Minister of Transportation and that we get on with making the intelligent, informed, consulted suggestions that I have made today. In fact, I'm putting them out on the table so that everybody can know that all members can make a contribution here. The point is, is anybody listening?

Now, as I go further west, I see the GTA and I see the work that's being done by the Greater Toronto Transit Authority. This was initiated by Minister Cansfield as well, the current Minister of Transportation. I was there at the opening. We said during the bill—Mr. Speaker, you probably know this. I think it was Bill 104. What they did with the bill was probably right, but there were two things wrong with it. I am still going to say the same thing on that bill. It's related to this to the extent it's under that minister's jurisdiction.

Here's the deal: The governance model was dysfunctional and there was no money. It's designed to fail. In fact, they'll spend from now until just after the election to do anything. No discredit to the people, the terms of reference, the governance model. There's no money, and they haven't done anything, except if you look in the \$100,000 disclosures, they will all be there. I'm not sure what they're doing actually. It's another level of government that's not really providing much service directly to people.

I think of autistic children who are being neglected by these large salaries for additional bureaucrats who aren't doing anything. No discredit to Rob MacIsaac and the rest of the good people, but the terms of reference are wrong, and we know it. They won't get David Miller to agree. I'll tell you what I mean by that. If you look at the model of the board—I'm going by memory here—I think there's Durham, York, Peel, Halton and Hamilton. So there are five areas that have a representative, the mayor or something like that. Peel wanted a couple more members. That was a problem, too. The city of Toronto

has four members and the province has two. Basically, they're the representatives of the minister, so they control the whole process. If it's a request for money, the two members who are appointed by Dalton McGuinty will vote against it because they'll be told to. That's how it will work, and it's unfortunate. In fact, if you look in the budget, there's no money. It's a sad state.

I'm going down the highway further. It's going to affect people all the way to Halton, basically. Now, there is some additional lane capacity being built on the west-bound 401 going through to Windsor. However, when you get to the Windsor border, there's a whole new ball game. Everything comes to a stop in both directions to get through Windsor and Huron Church, in that area. The federal government allowed in their last budget, I believe, \$540 million; Minister Flaherty and Minister Cannon, the federal Minister of Transportation. I spoke to those people, making sure I understood what I was saying. Quite frankly, they have said—whether it's a tunnel or it's an above-grade solution, it's the province's jurisdiction; it's a provincial issue. They are willing partners in this. It's not like they're throwing it over the fence and letting the province pay for it, because let's face it, there's only one taxpayer, whether it's the federal pocket, the provincial pocket or the municipal pocket.

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I think having safety in the environment, the emissions and a tunnel versus above grade are issues that experts can give us some advice on, and there should be discussions on that issue. That issue is costing the economy of Ontario jobs, and we see it in the manufacturing sector. There are 150,000 individuals—and their families—who haven't had a job in the last couple of years, with the inaction from Minister Papatello's economic involvement and Minister Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Energy. They're bobbing and weaving and they're not to be seen. They're ambivalent on the topic. I think the mayor of Windsor is disappointed too. A recent meeting on that tunnel project—it's a process.

So when I look at the ministry and I look at this bill, I come to this conclusion. It's important to summarize; I've been wandering around a bit. The summary is this: I'm concerned about this being introduced on the 12th and they want it passed within a month. It does affect young people. I think there should be a process where they get retrained or retuned in on some of the responsibility for the street racing component of it. There are provisions today for the fines. From \$200, they've moved that up almost 1000%. Now it's a \$10,000 fine. I'm interested in hearing from the OPP, the enforcement people, and what kinds of programs are going to be in place where we're driving this kind of activity off the street.

Young people today need to have outlets. We've spent an inordinate amount of time—I was in municipal government myself—building skateboard parks and that. They need to have some outlet here, and I think that might be part of the solution as well, having programs they can take. Maybe at Mosport in my riding they could

have trained professionals to give them advice and teach them responsible driving, so they then realize the privilege can be removed if you don't follow the rules, as opposed to whacking them with a \$10,000 fine and taking their car. Wait a minute here. I know it's wrong, and I am completely opposed to street racing of any form at any age, but when we're dealing with this, I think we should consult with some of the people who are professionals in this area to make sure we're providing options as opposed to their getting their backs up and probably acting out in other ways, once you've taken away all their liberty or something.

I just think it's sort of like that staying-in-school-to-18 bill, Bill 52. That's another one. The response was punitive. I think there are better ways; this is what worries me. Quite frankly, on this particular bill—I think they may have changed that bill under pressure from the union, and that's good.

It's important, as well, to recognize the work that's being done in Durham region. This is a publication they've put out, and I've made copies available to the Premier, to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

I want to conclude, and it's still related to the transportation ministry. Do you know what they said in the second-last budget? Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham region, as well as the mayors, even in this last budget were unanimously disappointed. There was nothing there for them. Even with the amount of money recently given out in the budget, if you looked at Toronto, Peel, Mississauga and York region and the Brampton AcceleRide program, Durham got nothing.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): They have no plan.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm going to repeat what the former minister said: "They have no plan." Well, they have a plan. Perhaps he's a little behind in his reading—not to be smart, but they have a plan. I'm assured they have a plan, and there are a couple of articles here: "Durham Region Council Includes Leaders for the New Era," and I'm just going to recognize them because there are some changes. Some of you probably know some of them. On the cover here—I'm going to read out who is on there. If you want to look this up on the Durham website, you can, and there's a lot of good information on economic updates, technology, workplace wellness, road tests—that's the big one—management and deal makers. It's going to be the energy capital of not just Ontario; it's going to be the energy capital of Canada. Ontario should be the leader in Canada. It's right now just barely above Prince Edward Island.

Here's what's happening: On the cover, the mayor of Ajax, an interesting fellow. I served with him on regional council, Steve Parish. His father was the mayor for many years, a nice guy. He's okay. Larry O'Connor from Brock. He was actually a member here. Larry O'Connor, now the mayor of Brock township, was a member for the NDP when they were government. Jim Abernethy is the brand new mayor of Clarington. He's never been elected

before and he's experiencing the experience he missed; let's put it that way. Marilyn Pearce is the mayor of Scugog, a nice person. I worked with her on a number of issues. Scugog, Port Perry—it's a destination community; it really is: Palmer park, named for the founder of chiropractic. It's got a lot of things going for it, a lot of great people. The hospital, if I might just put this in, Lakeridge Health in Durham, is another area that's been ignored by the McGuinty government. I've talked to Wayne Arthurs—he's not here today, but he's usually here—and Wayne is not exactly working with Christine Elliott, Jerry Ouellette and myself on this Lakeridge Health funding. Do you realize that every citizen living in Durham receives \$283 less than the provincial average in health care? Can you imagine what that means times 500,000 people? Over the last while, that \$30 million would have made the difference. We wouldn't have a deficit and they wouldn't be ordered by George Smitherman to cut children's mental health services.

In fact, Marilyn Pearce, the mayor of Scugog—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I know her.

Mr. O'Toole: I know her. She's a very nice, hard-working person, and that's great. I'm with her at a meeting in early May, and the theme is—I'm surprised, because she's a personal friend of George. I'm not trying to be clever here by half, but she's connected, probably more than I am, actually, which is fine. But she should talk to George. And Marilyn Emery from the central east LHIN—I'm in hopes that it works, because they've bought all the furniture and rented all of the offices. I'm not exactly sure what they're doing, but they're—

Mr. Rinaldi: They're doing a good job.

Mr. O'Toole: They aren't doing anything, member from Northumberland. Name one thing they're doing except buying furniture and picking out the signs. They haven't done anything yet. They took over April 1. We'll see what they do.

And then there is a brand new mayor, Pat Perkins, from Whitby. She was a councillor for some time. I served with her—excellent. And Bob Shepherd is the brand new mayor of Uxbridge.

So there's a mixture of deep, rich experience and new, invigorated enthusiasm. I think they have a great opportunity to lead Durham into the future as the energy capital of Canada.

I want to commend the work done by the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance, because this group—there's an energy park discussion going on right now in my riding of Clarington. We have the Darlington nuclear plant. John Tory last night made a very firm commitment that we're not going to run out of energy under a Conservative government, unlike the current quagmire that's occurring under the Minister of Energy, Dwight Duncan. In fact, the file is beyond him, I think. For a bit of time, they moved him over to finance when Greg, the Minister of Finance, had to step down because of outside issues. But when he moved in, here's what actually happened: I think he lost part of the file, because he promised one time to close the coal plants in 2007, and then he came

back and changed it to 2009. I think the date now is to be determined. They haven't really got a plan.

So in transportation they have no plan, and when I look at Durham region—why am I mentioning this? What is the infrastructure for the economy? Transit. Get with the game. And all we want is our fair share—no more. That's what I'm here for, to make sure that under these provisions in Bill 203, which are somewhat related—it's the same ministry—we have our fair share.

I would say, with the very limited time I've had, that I have a few other things. I think it's important, because I'm very proud to represent Durham, having served on their regional council and locally. I lived there, and when leave here, I'll still be living there. Mr. Speaker, you probably want to know as well. People ask me, and I'm sure all members get asked, "What's the most important thing in your riding?" Mr. Ramal, from London: Is it the dump, Green Lane?

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: No. Whatever. What is the most important issue?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): We fixed most of them.

Mr. O'Toole: You fixed most of them. That's what the member from London-Fanshawe is saying, and in fact he just got a dump in his riding. So I'm not sure what you mean by fixing it. But here's the deal: In Durham—all the members in London are in serious trouble. They're running now. They're announcing money here and there. It's this "Haste makes waste" thing, the reference I made earlier.

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Here's the deal: I know, because I live there and I listen to the people, that the number one issue in the economy is the auto sector and the 407. These are the families. The 407 right now—the Minister of Education is here and she should know. She's a very clever lady and I appreciate and admire that, but half as smart as John Tory. But anyway, that's a whole deal.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: October 10, we'll see.

Mr. O'Toole: No, I'm only kidding. What I really meant to say there is that she would know that there was not a nickel in the budget for the 407. It's the highest priority of 500,000 people who are asking. It's the number one priority. In fact, I say it here and I'm going to repeat it because the former minister is here, and I know he has listened because he is involved with the economy and small business. That's his responsibility as minister in that area. It's important. It is the arteries of the economy.

Also, enhanced and extended service in public transit in urban areas: Recognize the Durham region integrated plan like you have York and Brampton in AcceleRide and the other programs. In Kitchener-Waterloo there's a very sophisticated plan as well. I think that Durham's turn has come. It may sound trite or trivial or just like a cute expression, but there's a growing population. There's a university there. There is soon to be the home of an energy centre for Canada which probably will

include a new nuclear reactor within the next number of years. That progress and that work are being done, and we need the infrastructure to make it work. People can work on the smart plan that you took credit for the other day. Your Minister of Municipal Affairs and your Minister of Infrastructure Renewal took great pride in announcing the award for that plan. By the way, he was courteous enough to recognize the former Minister of Municipal Affairs on this side for the work that was done by the ministry and the deputy. The civil service had done a tremendous job in recognizing how we manage growth in the future. Good stuff; I don't have any problem with it.

Here's my deal. If that's going to work, you've got to have a transit plan that works, and I don't see one. I even heard ministers saying that there was no plan. I can assure you that it's a sophisticated region of over 500,000 people. It's bigger than most provinces: Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. It's an important economic capital, with the largest auto complex in the world, and the largest nuclear facility active and running in the world, a successful operation, I might say. I just ask if one thing be remembered by the Minister of Transportation: the 407, the number one infrastructure piece in the riding, and alongside that continuing to work on transit.

I would say that our fair share in the transit funding dollars and the gas tax dollars needs to recognize the rural parts that aren't necessarily serviced by transit. Roads and bridges: There needs to be allocation of funding for that infrastructure to service the agricultural community. It's critical.

The other part of this is finishing the job on health care. What I mean by that: The history there is that the Health Services Restructuring Commission recognized the growth, and there's a cancer centre about to be opened shortly. It's about time. But the operating funding is a huge issue and affects the vulnerable members of our society: children with mental health issues and families that are struggling because of these issues. I would ask them to consider that in the acquiescent way that I've said I'm supporting, on behalf of John Tory and the opposition, Bill 203. Let's get on and do some of the work that needs to be done, some of which I spoke of today.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to begin by commending the member from Durham, who at the outset said he was hoping he would have a colleague to come and share the time with him. No one did show up to help him, so I want to congratulate him for ragging the puck for the last hour. It's a long time—been there and done that—so good for you, especially on a Thursday afternoon.

There are two things that I just want to reinforce in terms of issues that people want to think about more than I, especially those who are going to be dealing with this bill when I won't. I know my colleague from Toronto-Danforth is going to speak at length next and will probably raise some of these as well.

I want to deal first with the matter of the increased authority to govern and impose fees for administration, impaired driving and road racing. There is authority in the bill to impose consequences when fees or penalties are not paid. I don't think those consequences are outlined, so I don't know how harsh or less harsh they are to be or what the government has in mind in that regard. I'm hoping that someone is going to spell that out for us.

Even though there are consequences that can be imposed, and they remain undefined, it also says in the bill that there are exemptions from the payment of fees or penalties under certain conditions and under certain circumstances. Again, those certain circumstances, those certain conditions involving exemptions are not outlined in the bill. I suspect they are going to be dealt with in regulation, but it would be interesting to hear from the government about what they have in mind in terms of exemptions in this regard.

Secondly, there are also issues around previous suspensions and how, five years or more after they've occurred, they won't be taken into account. I ask the question about how many repeat offences are necessary before you might have harsher consequences. That's not defined too.

Mr. McNeely: I'd just like to respond to what the member from Durham has said. He took us all the way from sheep to buses to nuclear facilities to Windsor. We had a trip across Toronto, including the 407. So over an hour, we've gone to Windsor and back. I'm pleased to say, though, that the member from Durham supports this legislation. He said that at the end of his hour and he said that at the beginning of the hour. I think that's very important.

He was part of the participation when we got together with many people on street racing. We had that consultation with the police forces, with citizens, with insurance companies. That process, which was led by our minister, Minister Cansfield, was very productive and I think we've got good legislation coming out of that.

I'd like to say, though, that when you get into some issues—Durham is very important, I agree with the member. To show that importance, \$241 million has been committed there since we took over government in 2003. So Durham has been getting its good share. I think GO Transit has had \$1.6 billion in investments. You talked about the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority and that whole area from Oshawa to Hamilton. There's recognition that those dollars have to be spent and that public transit has to be improved in our province.

I'd just like to remind the member that when you were in government, all government support for public transit was cancelled. In 1999-2000 there was zero. As a consulting engineer in eastern Ontario, we could see that it dropped from 75% to zero. That's your legacy. We're trying to rebuild that.

The Acting Speaker: It's not time for—

Mr. O'Toole: I'd be part of the round, wouldn't I?

The Acting Speaker: No. Unfortunately, you've been around.

The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Tabuns: Like my colleague from Nickel Belt, I have to say that the member from Durham did very well, speaking for an hour in a situation where he expected to be relieved partway through. My congratulations for that.

I have to take out a particular piece that he addressed in the course of his speech, and that's the whole question of intensification and actually reducing the need for driving in the first place. We can deal with a variety of issues in discussion of this bill, but there's no question that right at the heart is this whole question of having a density level in the area of the GTA, the greater Golden Horseshoe, that will be enough to support very rapid, very convenient, low-cost transit. To the extent that the larger framework of government planning doesn't support that initiative to the extent that the larger framework of government planning allows for sprawl to leapfrog over the greenbelt and frankly allows for continued irrational development of the suburban or exurban area of the GTA, we will continue to have to deal with traffic problems, injuries and fatalities.

1650

In this bill, we're dealing with a more limited subset of the problem. We're dealing with irresponsible driving, provoked through either alcohol intoxication or street racing, and to that limited extent, the bill has some useful elements in it. Those questions, however, have to be understood in that larger context raised by the member from Durham, that we have, as a necessity, the need to actually look at the density, look at the urban planning of the greater Golden Horseshoe and make sure that it doesn't continue on as it has, on a business-as-usual basis, to provide sprawl and a demand for car-based transit that in the end is going to have a very negative impact both on our environment and on the health status, the mortality of people in this urban area. I would hope that the Minister of Transportation would look at this larger question and not simply end her efforts or interests with dealing with the questions of street racing and alcohol.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: Thank you for giving me the chance and opportunity to comment on the speech by the member from Durham region. I was listening to him. As my colleague mentioned, he travelled all over the province, but I would commend to the member for Durham that he go back and learn geography. He mentioned many different spots that don't exist.

He also talked about the 407. He was part of the government that sold that highway. He could have played a pivotal role in blocking his government from selling it if he thought it was important for the people of Ontario. Now we have to pay the price.

I congratulate the minister for bringing a very important piece of legislation to help support the safety

of this province, especially banning people from drinking and driving and also street racing. We see a lot of young guys who have fast cars, and they like to race. It's not safe for themselves, for the people around them and for other cars driving on the same street.

It's happened in my riding of London-Fanshawe—two young, beautiful guys, 18 or 19 years old. They felt strong. They had two fast cars and they were speeding and racing. What happened? They had an accident. One of them is almost paralyzed right now. So we have to put those pieces in place to protect the people of Ontario.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Transportation again for bringing such an important piece of legislation to protect the people in this province, and also to equip the police, to give them the chance, the authority and the technique to protect themselves, to use their blue and red lights. It's very important. Sometimes you cannot see a certain light in certain conditions, and the blue ones will be seen obviously in other conditions. This mix of lighting is very important to give an indication to people that the police are coming, to create safety for the police and for others.

I hope the members opposite will stand up and support the bill because it's a very important bill.

The Acting Speaker: The time for questions and comments has expired. I look forward to the response by the member for Durham.

Mr. O'Toole: Please forgive the fact that I'm not wearing my jacket. It's kind of warm in here this afternoon.

I thank the members from Nickel Belt, Ottawa-Orléans, Toronto-Danforth and London-Fanshawe. Comments have been made that are important. In this business you have to give and you have to receive, and often they're complimentary and often they're not.

That being said, I think I've made the point very succinctly that we're calling for hearings on this bill. I think it's important to consult with stakeholders and young people. This has an important educational opportunity as well as finding the right mechanism for changing behaviour. Consult with some of the educators in the province who work with children that find and want other outlets. I suspect members on all sides would be happy to participate in that.

There are other substantive parts in the bill that may be challenged in the courts; that's the licence suspension provision as well as the impaired provision when someone has not been found guilty, has been charged but not had a hearing on it. The suspension could be challenged as well.

We'll leave those things for the brighter lights to describe and discuss. I just want to thank the people from the ministry for carrying forward the good work that Frank Klees has done. I look forward to Frank returning there in October 2007. And also Dave Bradley from the Ontario Trucking Association—I know the work they're doing on 105 and the speed limiter issue. The Ontario Road Builders are important partners in this process going forward because they have to form partnerships to

build the capital—and we need Kris Barnier from the CAA, the work he does, and Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League. And the school bus operators—Rick Donaldson and others.

There are a lot of issues. There are a lot of stakeholders. What we're advocating is to listen to the stakeholders, refine this bill and get it right. It's about making our highways in the province safer for our young people and for all people who are citizens and pay taxes in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Time for further debate. The Chair recognizes the member from Toronto-Danforth.

Applause.

Mr. Tabuns: It's late on a Thursday afternoon, Mr. Speaker; I can tell. Thank you for the generosity and the applause, colleagues.

This act deals with issues that are financially, emotionally and morally quite consequential. Before we get into the content of the bill, what I'd like to talk to you about—my colleagues in the chamber—is the larger context. What are the issues that we're grappling with? What's the bigger picture that we have to take into account when we assess this bill?

In 2004, the injury surveillance program of Health Canada put out a study, Road Safety in Canada. They talked about the reality that in Canada, one of the largest countries in the world, we have a population density that's very small. Across Canada—and frankly even here in the GTA—we're in a situation where public transportation is limited, not really available to the population in a way that needs to be there to keep people out of their cars, on buses, on subways, on streetcars. This low density, this lack of transit, leads to the fact that Canada relies more heavily than most other countries in the world on private motor vehicles. In fact, we had in 2004 almost 19 million vehicles on our roads, 21 million drivers, 900,000 kilometres of road. Unfortunately, one of the fallouts from that reality is that we have a large number of collisions; we have a large number of fatalities and injuries that result in hospitalization or require other medical care.

In 2001, there were almost 2,800 deaths in Canada from motor vehicle collisions. In 2000-01, there were 24,400 hospital-related admissions that resulted from traffic collisions. Many of the victims are young. Traffic collisions are a leading cause of premature death and disability in this country.

We have a very large population in cars all the time in this country, every day, so it's not surprising that vehicle occupants account for approximately three quarters of all road users killed and seriously injured during the year. The remaining victims are vulnerable pedestrians, motorcyclists and bicyclists. But the bulk, three quarters, are occupants of motor vehicles. So when we're talking about road safety, we're talking about an issue that touches on life and death issues for very large numbers of people in this country.

Interestingly, in this study that was released in 2004 the health care costs, the property losses, other factors,

were put together—and, I assume, had an accounting model applied—and the annual cost in Canada from collisions on highways is in the range of \$25 billion, which is an extraordinary amount of money, an extraordinary amount of loss to this country, to its economy, to its people. We have an obligation, on a lot of levels, to take care of this problem, to address it, to do everything we can to reduce it.

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It's worth noting that within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—OECD—countries, Canada has the fifth-lowest rate of traffic deaths per billion vehicle miles traveled. We have the 13th-lowest rate when measured as deaths per 100,000. Our rates of death and injury are comparable to those of other developed countries. We're not a particularly bad player, but we still have a significant burden that we have to deal with in this country. In fact, in this country we've seen a substantial decline in deaths over the last few decades. Since 1982, the death rate on highways in Canada has declined by about 50%. That has happened even while we've had this very significant increase in the number of people on the roads and the number of cars on the roads. That is a worthwhile achievement, and it has been a reality that has occurred under a variety of governments with a variety of policies. Obviously some of the things that have made the biggest difference are mandating seat belts, child restraints, more stringent drinking and driving laws, public education, more enforcement campaigns, safer vehicles, and investment in road infrastructure. All of these things together have meant fewer people killed on the road and fewer people injured on the road, but we still have rates of death and injury that are very high, that are clearly not acceptable to society as a whole and certainly not acceptable to the members of this Legislature.

When you look more closely at those statistics—and that bears directly on the context of this bill—drivers account for more than half of all road users killed. You can look at a variety of things: driver experience, health limitations amongst elderly drivers, single-vehicle crashes on undivided rural roads—often connected to drinking—and obviously non-use of seat belts. In fact, approximately 40% of all fatally injured occupants are unrestrained. Beyond those, we have the questions of alcohol and excessive speed that are recognized as important contributing factors in many collisions.

Our two groups that are at greatest risk are people at the youth end of the spectrum, ages 16 to 19, and elderly drivers, 75 years and over, at 27 deaths per billion kilometres travelled—that's the rate for those young drivers—and 20 deaths per billion vehicle kilometres for the older drivers. In Canada, we've done some things around young drivers. In a number of provinces we have graduated licensing programs. They've proven effective in reducing collisions causing injuries amongst young drivers, and we've taken action on people who are drinking and driving. That is one of the central pieces of this bill.

We have to know that we've seen a decrease in the number of people killed because of drinking and driving; it's much less than a decade ago. The use of programs such as alcohol ignition interlock, which is proposed in this bill, was actually being discussed a number of years ago. Programs for rehabilitation, training and assessment have been introduced in other jurisdictions. Those are things that we need to do here. Frankly, they should have been done earlier, but better late now, even with an election coming on, than never having them dealt with at all.

Having talked about Canada, Ontario in 2001 reported the lowest fatality rate in Canada. So we obviously, over a number of decades, have been doing some things right. In fact, in 2001 we had the lowest number of people dying on the roads than any previous year since 1950, even though in that year 845 people died. So, consistent with what the minister was saying: two per day; a little more than that a number of years ago.

There are a number of factors in Ontario that are directly related to fatalities and injuries. One hundred and forty-nine or 18% of Ontario road fatalities in 2001 involved speeding: going above the speed limit, going too fast for conditions. Seventy-two fatalities involved drivers who failed to yield right of way, and a number involved drivers who disobeyed traffic controls.

We've seen, from 2001 to 2004, continued drops in road fatalities. In fact, drinking and driving fatalities in Ontario decreased by more than 10% between 2001 and 2004. So we're continuing to see an improvement in safety conditions on Ontario roads, and it's to our advantage to keep that rolling along.

But when we talk about this bill, let's keep in mind very clearly that we're talking not about simple administrative or clerical matters—and we're not talking just dollars and cents, although that certainly is there—we're talking about lives; we're talking about deaths and tragedies that come to families. There is a huge, huge personal cost.

The organization Transport 2000 earlier in this decade put out a report about spine and brain injuries from vehicle crashes. Their focus in this report was talking about why Ontario needed to invest much more in transit, much more in rail and much more in development of an urban form that allowed people to walk or take transit to their destinations. They use some pretty powerful examples. They talked about the level of deaths—as I said, about 840 fatalities a year, and 82,000 injuries per year, obviously not all of them requiring hospitalization. But that's a lot of injuries and a lot of people suffering in the course of a year. When you talk about a \$25-billion cost to Canada as a whole for injuries and fatalities on roads, when you look at Ontario, they cited a 1990 study of about \$9 billion as the burden on Ontario's economy.

I have to say that their report was quite striking because not only did they talk about the numbers—which are stark enough, which are impressive enough—but they actually talked about the situation of a number of individuals whose cases they traced through spinal cord

injury and brain injuries that they'd suffered in their vehicles. These stories of people whose lives had been turned upside down—who had gone from being athletes, who had gone from being mothers, fully employed, looking after children, who were young people in university who became paraplegic, quadriplegic or suffered brain injuries that essentially put their lives into limbo—were very moving, very stirring, very disturbing stories. The reality for us is that even though the numbers have been declining, even though things have been improving over the last three or four decades in Ontario, the price that individuals have to pay, the price that families have to pay, the price that our whole society has to pay for the carnage on our roads is an unacceptable price. It's incumbent upon us to look at the measures available to us, to look at the steps that we can take to actually substantially change those numbers.

The simple law of averages says that we will never get to zero. But the reality of the last few decades is that we've had a substantial impact through implementation of common sense measures. My hope is—again, going back to the Minister of Transportation—that she will take this bill and look at the larger picture of what has to be addressed, because simply putting in place punitive or administrative measures, as useful as they may be, is not going to be enough to take the further steps that we need to get as close to zero as we can.

1710

What's in the bill? What has the minister actually put before us? This bill gives the government increased authority to impose fees for administration costs for impaired driving, for road racing, and there's authority to impose consequences when fees or penalties are not paid. As has been remarked earlier by the member from Nickel Belt, there are exemptions from payment, under certain conditions and circumstances, that are going to be set out in regulation. I think it's important for the minister or her parliamentary assistant, in the course of debating this bill, to speak about the conditions under which exemptions will be granted, to give us, as legislators, a sense of precisely what they envision and what sort of burden will be placed on those who are not driving responsibly, who are not treating the community—society—in a way that it should be treated.

Bill 203 provides for increased roadside suspension of licences of impaired drivers. Police can stop vehicles and do a breath test with an approved and calibrated screening device or instrument. If the blood-alcohol concentration is 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, that's .05—in the course of this debate, you'll hear .05, .08 or zero.

If those levels are detected and indicated by a "warn" or "alert" diagnosis, the roadside officer can suspend the licence of the person who has been pulled over. The blood-alcohol threshold for suspension has been reduced from .08 to .05. I think there's a general agreement that it makes sense to do that. We continue to have people dying on our roads—killed on our roads—because people have consumed alcohol and gone driving.

The period of suspension for those who are found to be violating the standard: first offence, three days; second offence, seven days; third offence, 30 days. It's interesting that previous suspensions won't be considered if they occurred five or more years previously. Whether this is material, whether this is a weakening of the bill, I have to think about some more.

But it's interesting that the officer may also impound the vehicle of an impaired driver at the expense of the owner of the vehicle. I think that makes sense, frankly. If you are irresponsible, if you've been out drinking, if you are putting yourself and the lives of others at risk, then it makes sense to me that not only should you be suspended but that your vehicle be impounded. I think you will probably find a fair amount of support in this House for this measure as this bill goes forward.

We should note that even if people have their licence suspended three times at the roadside, there's no guarantee that there will be a conviction after that; obviously, a judge has the discretion to decide who will and will not be convicted. But we should know that the more severe penalties don't flow automatically from these simple suspensions. There's no certainty that a repeat offender will lose driving privileges over the long term. That's something I look forward to hearing the minister address. I'd like the minister to tell us how many repeat offences are necessary before there are harsher consequences in place. If the parliamentary assistant can address that in his comments, it would be useful.

If a driver is convicted, then licence suspension is increased: first conviction, one year; second conviction, three years; third conviction, indefinitely. Note that the bill provides for an ignition interlock condition that will make it easier for offenders to apply to get their licences early, if they agree to a conduct review program—I'll talk about that a bit later—which may include the installation of an ignition interlock program. That's a device that analyzes the breath of the driver before they put the key in the ignition and are allowed to drive away. One of the questions I'd have for the minister is, what's the penalty if they disarm or override that interlock?

This bill has had commentary from a number of stakeholders in a number of quarters. Mothers Against Drunk Driving put out a press release, and their commentary was that this bill had some steps in the right direction, but they were disappointed that zero blood alcohol content for five years is not included in the announced legislation, and I'm going to read what they had to say, because they are obviously one of the more significant, more pre-eminent, groups dealing with this issue in Canada.

"Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Canada welcomes the Ontario government's proposed impaired driving legislation. MADD Canada's chief executive officer Andrew Murie describes measures announced by Premier Dalton McGuinty's today as 'steps in the right direction.'

"'It is good to see this government recognize our impaired driving laws need to be more effective,' says

Mr. Murie. "While we are pleased with the announcement, we are disappointed that the government did not take this opportunity to enhance its graduated licence program with a zero [blood alcohol content] limit for new drivers for five years."

It's interesting. I wasn't aware of the initiatives that have taken place in other jurisdictions, and he goes on:

"Other jurisdictions like Manitoba and Nova Scotia have introduced zero-BAC-for-five-years laws. Zero and low BAC limits have been introduced for all drivers under 21 in the United States and this has resulted in significant reductions in impaired driving fatalities," says Mr. Murie."

What I again ask the government to comment on is why we didn't follow the example of these other jurisdictions. If they have in fact seen further reductions in fatalities or injury from drunk driving, why have we not gone that course? Why would we stop at the point that we've stopped at?

Mothers Against Drunk Driving goes on in its press release:

"In its report, *Youth and Impaired Driving in Canada: Opportunities for Change*, MADD Canada presents a compelling case for introducing enhanced graduated licensing programs and a zero-BAC limit for five years."

Here are the facts that they rely on in their argument that the government should have gone further than they did in this bill. They say:

"Despite the progress that has been made, young drivers are still dramatically overrepresented in alcohol-related fatalities. While 16- to 25-year-olds constitute only 13.7% of the Canadian population, they account for 32.1% of the alcohol-related traffic fatalities."

Now, that's quite a difference. This is a group that's dramatically overrepresented in the alcohol-related statistics in this country. Again I would ask, why haven't we followed the lead of the United States and other jurisdictions in Canada in bringing forward legislation that will have a more profound impact on saving lives in this age category?

"Young people have the highest reported rates of daily, weekly and monthly heavy drinking and binge drinking. They also have high reported rates of driving after drinking and being a passenger in a vehicle of a drinking driver."

"While 2002 per capita rates of federal impaired driving charges are relatively low among 16- to 17-year-olds, they rose sharply among 18- to 20-year-olds, peaked among 21-year-olds and then fell gradually with age."

"Traffic crashes remain the largest single cause of death among Canadian youth, accounting for almost one third of all deaths. Even conservatively estimated, over 45% of these traffic deaths are alcohol-related."

Clearly, we have a significant problem here within that larger problem of alcohol-related traffic deaths. We have a group, young people in this country, who are car-reliant, car-dependent, who are at a point in their lives when they're quite likely to take risks, quite likely to

drink heavily, and yet this province didn't take the steps that other jurisdictions in Canada have taken to in fact deal with the problem more effectively, I guess would be the right term.

1720

Mothers Against Drunk Driving goes on to say:

"Professor Robert Solomon, MADD Canada's director of legal policy, states, 'Extensive research from Canada and abroad establishes that zero blood alcohol content limits for new drivers significantly decreases alcohol-related traffic deaths among this vulnerable population.'"

So, given the statistics, given the reality, I don't see why this government didn't set or follow the standard that is set in other jurisdictions and that actually is shown to have a positive impact on those death rates.

MADD Canada, talking about the seven-day roadside licence suspensions, says they "had also hoped the government would have followed the advice of its own transportation officials in extending the administrative drivers' licence suspension period to seven days, not to 72 hours as proposed."

The CEO of MADD goes on to say, "Ontario's officials participated in a national review of most effective licence suspension practices. There was a consensus that longer driver licence suspensions were needed to effectively alter a drinking driver's behaviour. All provincial and territorial officials recognized seven days as a meaningful suspension period."

Again, a question for the government: If in fact their own officials were recommending this, if this is in line with the best thinking that we have in Canada at this time, why did they not choose to follow this particular recommendation?

Mr. Murie, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving CEO, went on to say, "Although it is good to see the government announcing a 72-hour licence suspension, we hope that eventually Ontario and the remaining jurisdictions across Canada will implement the recommended seven-day licence suspension for impaired driving."

"With today's ... legislation, Mr. McGuinty took steps in the right direction." But he adds, "For our part, we will continue to work with the government and present the empirical research and international experience to achieve more effective impaired driving laws in Ontario."

It's an endorsement by Mothers Against Drunk Driving that's very heavily qualified. They see the value and the steps headed in the right direction but make a very good argument that in fact the government could have gone further, been more effective and dealt with the tragedies that play out on our roads on a daily basis across this province and across this country.

I want to go back to the act. Note that the act provides for a conduct review program that includes interviews, assessments, remedial programs, courses, individual or group education sessions, examinations, and, as I said earlier, installation of an interlock device. The logic behind this is good. I think simple punishment has its use but is not adequate to deal with the full scope of the problem at hand.

One of the things I came across in the course of preparing for this debate was a report that the Addiction Research Foundation had posted on their website entitled *Factors Influencing Aggregate Indicators of Drinking-Driving in the United States*, which is a long title. Essentially, these researchers had looked at the drinking-driving statistics in a number of jurisdictions in the United States during the period from 1982 to 1990 to try and understand what were all the aggregate indicators in the society that allowed one to determine whether a course of action had the impact that we needed or didn't. Can we tease out of those statistics a clear picture of the kinds of actions that will actually provide the relief on our highways so that we don't deal with the staggering social cost or the tragic personal human cost that comes from this long and large number of people injured and killed?

They looked at a number of items such as specific efforts to prevent drinking and driving or other alcohol-related problems. They found it often difficult to get data. They looked at a number of different prevention-relevant measures. They looked at traffic fatality rates. They looked at per capita consumption of alcohol and the rates of drinking-driving arrests, alcohol abuse treatment and AA membership, looked at the numbers in these periods and how different programs would actually give answers to legislators and decision-makers like those of us here today.

What they found was that the total fatality rates were very much related to, connected to, per capita consumption of alcohol and drinking-driving arrest rates. So if you have a society that drinks an awful lot more, regardless of other factors, you are going to have more drunk-driving problems. One of the things that was interesting to me is that they found that membership in Alcoholics Anonymous had a definite correlation with reduced drinking-driving fatalities and injuries in the societies that they were studying.

When they actually looked at the impact of enforcement and deterrent effects, they didn't find a strong relationship. They did note that if there were a lot more arrests for drinking and driving, that tended to reflect the fact that there was a very high level of drinking and driving in a society, not necessarily that it would drive down the numbers. I think that should not deter us from taking action as outlined in the legislation, but it says that we have to look beyond enforcement and deterrence to actually have the full impact that we need to have.

They say that it makes sense to proceed with tougher penalties around drinking and driving and that it would make a lot of sense to promote programs that help people avoid addiction in the first place. Clearly, as they say, AA membership, a reduction in addictive behaviour, helps to reduce traffic deaths, according to this research. They say, and I think quite correctly—

Interjection.

Mr. Tabuns: Welcome to the new Chair. Shift change—I hope you punched in the clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mario Sergio): Absolutely.

Mr. Tabuns: Anyway, my point was that if we actually want to deal with drinking and driving, it makes just as much sense, and in some ways maybe more so, to invest not only in transportation or enforcement but to invest in health measures and education measures that will drive down addiction.

It's very clear from the numbers that I gave earlier, the numbers of \$25 billion a year in Canada, \$9 billion a year in Ontario—roughly a third of those costs related to drinking-driving—that we're talking about a multi-billion-dollar impact on our society. Frankly, this is a society that would benefit tremendously from investing in all of those programs that would stop addiction in the first place.

When I talk to medical professionals in my riding who are dealing with addiction, they say that making sure that children are raised with love and with security has a huge impact on addiction rates in adulthood. There is not always a clear one-to-one correlation but a very strong tendency to suggest that people who go through extremely difficult childhoods—those who are abused physically, emotionally, sexually—are more prone to addiction than those who go through a childhood that's secure, that provides them with the warmth and the comfort that they need to grow up psychologically and physically strong.

1730

For us, to the extent that we don't invest in our children, to the extent that we don't make sure that our children are given all the supports they need to develop that strength early on, we pay for it very heavily much later. We pay for it in direct addiction costs and clearly we pay for it on our highways. In terms of moving the agenda forward, this bill can be a useful piece, but there is a larger piece that I would urge the government to consider—dealing with addiction development in the first place and then, later on, dealing with addiction treatment—so that at every stage we reinforce strength and stability in people's lives and in their psyches so that they aren't out on the highway driving a multi-tonne vehicle that can do huge damage to themselves, to the occupants of their vehicle and to others around them.

The legislation allows for the use of additional flashing-light colours on emergency vehicles. I note that it's there not because it's controversial; frankly, it's very straightforward. This is a step that was taken earlier in other jurisdictions. It made sense in those ones. I wish this government had brought this forward earlier in its mandate, but again, we should move forward on this piece. There need not be any great debate in the House on it. We need to move it forward.

The last significant piece of the bill tries to address the whole question of street racing. Interestingly, last year the CBC did a fairly big piece of research on street racing in Canada. This has been a phenomenon that's been a problem for decades here in Ontario. We've had something like 35 deaths since 1999. In terms of the hundreds who die every year on the road in Ontario, it's not a large number, but for those who are victims of it and for those

who are aware of those who have been victims of it, it's particularly horrifying.

We have a culture in this society in which street racing in films and in video games tends to be glorified, tends to be presented as fascinating and exciting, and my guess is that for those who are engaged in it at the time, it is. But for those who are victims of it, this is not a particularly pretty picture. It's not in fact a pretty picture at all; it's a horrifying picture.

We know about people who have died in street racing. In 2002, RCMP Constable Jimmy Ng was killed instantly when a car that was involved in street racing came through a light and hit him, rammed his car. He died on the spot. He was a young man, doing a job that we see as socially necessary, killed out of stupidity. We all feel the human impact of that kind of loss.

Closer to home, Rob and Lisa Manchester died in a suspected street-racing incident in May 2006, just north of Toronto. They left behind their 7-year-old daughter, Katie. They had been out celebrating their 17th wedding anniversary.

It's clear that there are very troubling, very disturbing human tragedies that occur out of this totally irresponsible, totally stupid behaviour by people who have no sense of what they're doing, out in cars that are quite powerful, in some instances using technologies that supercharge them. I think we have a responsibility to take action on this.

In Ontario there is a program, ERASE—Eliminate Racing Activities on Streets Everywhere—a joint project of a variety of police departments that is trying to deal with this problem. When contacted about their experience, they say simply that in Ontario the number of people dying from street racing is rising.

In Canada as a whole there is not a specific law against street racing. There are penalties for speeding and for reckless driving. If someone is killed or injured, there are a number of Criminal Code sections that would apply: criminal negligence causing death obviously, dangerous operation of a vehicle, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and the dangerous operation of a vehicle. But it's very unusual for street racers to be caught or to be in any substantial way penalized.

Constable Taylor, who's working on the ERACE program says that, to his knowledge, he knows of no "convicted street racer who's served more than five months in jail," which is an astounding thought, given the impact of this irresponsibility and given the distaste and disgust that people in this society feel for this particular activity. It's amazing to me that it's no more than five months.

One example he cited—and this was quoted by CBC, "In November 2000, street racers in Vancouver killed 52-year-old Irene Thorpe, a pedestrian, and were convicted of criminal negligence causing death." There were two teens involved and they were given conditional sentences of two years less a day and placed under house arrest. That was a sentence that outraged people, and I think rightly so. Someone, who was entirely innocent, walking

down the street, was killed because of outrageous behaviour on the part of these two street racers.

This behaviour needs to be dealt with both at the federal level and at this level, and it needs to be dealt with not only in terms of penalties but looking at other things that can be done to make street racing less attractive and make it less common in our cities.

One of the things the police will say when they talk about street racing is that it can be very difficult to peg a traffic accident on a street racer. It could have been just a racing car or it may be difficult to prove that there were two cars involved at the time that an accident occurred. One of the things police say happens is that frequently they find out about street racing after a race has occurred far more often than they actually ever encounter it or see it. That is an extraordinarily problematic thing. It says to us that punishing an act that is very rarely caught may not do enough to actually stop the act in the first place.

One of the things that's been done in Vancouver is to actually redesign streets, putting up medians and curbs in narrow roads that were used for drag racing, so that it became far more difficult physically to actually use a road that way. It makes sense to me. Police have developed a zero tolerance policy targeting cars that are modified to go faster even if drivers weren't caught speeding down the strip. I know that was mentioned by some members of the opposition, the need to take action on people who use nitrous oxide to soup up their cars to make them far more powerful. I would like to know from the minister why that particular issue wasn't addressed in the legislation because, again, we have to acknowledge that far too often we will never catch the people who are actually engaged in street racing. We occasionally will when there's a fatality, but we don't want that to be the measure. We want to stop the activity so we don't get the fatalities in the first place.

1740

One of the things that police say needs to be done is to change the image of street racing. A number of years ago, drunk driving was looked on as a joke. It was not considered reprehensible. People did it, particularly young people, and it was simply something that passed by and people went on. Well, that isn't the situation any more. People reject it. It's not something you want to be known for. It's not something you want your neighbours to know about you.

That move in our culture around drunk driving, I'm sure, contributed to this reduction in deaths from drunk driving in society as a whole, and we need to do similar things around street racing. We need to invest not only in enforcement, but we need to invest in that cultural marketing that changes people's perceptions, particularly young people—changes their perceptions of what's acceptable and what's not. Putting at risk the lives of quite a number of innocent people through street racing can't be acceptable.

Now, in the United States, there are a variety of measures related to street racing, a number of punitive measures that have been taken. One of the things that's very

interesting when you actually go to American websites and look at the steps that they've taken to address street racing—obviously a fair amount of surveillance makes sense, but even more interestingly, the police in a number of jurisdictions have sponsored legal drag racing on separate tracks.

They just simply decided that if people are going to be racing their cars anyway, do it in a place that's isolated from traffic and do it in a place where there's an opportunity at least to control drinking. In fact, drinking isn't allowed in these police-sponsored drag-racing areas. If people really want to be part of that culture and they really want to test their vehicles, let them do it outside of the streets where we walk, where we drive our own cars. That's something, again, the Ministry of Transportation should look at.

What we need to deal with this problem is a multi-pronged strategy that deals with culture, that deals with what you might call a harm reduction strategy to get drag racers, street racers, out of residential neighbourhoods, off of the thoroughfares that we use on a day-to-day basis, and get them into restricted areas where they can risk themselves but not the rest of us.

Let's look at what's in this bill on this matter, now that we have a sense of what the larger picture is. Street-racing fines have been increased to a minimum of \$2,000 and a maximum of \$10,000 and licence suspensions have increased as well. It makes sense. First conviction penalty: not more than two years. Subsequent conviction: not more than 10 years. Previous convictions won't be considered if they occurred 10 or more years previous, and a police officer is permitted to take the driver's licence for a seven-day administration suspension and impound the car of the suspected street racer.

It's interesting that the legislation will also apply to drivers' licences issued outside Ontario. I would say, again, given the distaste that we have in this society for this particular practice, the fatal consequences of this practice, that the government has made a useful first step on this.

Some questions that arise in going through the legislation: What are the consequences for repeat offenders? Where will the funding come from to implement enforcement? There have been some concerns expressed by police that they are already over-extended in covering duties. Where will they get the resources to do this greater work?

A lot has been left to regulation by the Lieutenant Governor: administrative fees for licence suspension, exemptions from payment for administrative fees and establishing conduct review programs, and the fee for conduct review programs.

It's interesting here that there will be an exception for persons from street racing requirements who have "prescribing conditions." It would be useful for all of us to know what those would be, and I look forward to seeing the definitions for "race", "contest" and "stunt" with respect to street racing.

We think it is useful for the government to move forward on these issues. In keeping with all that's been

done in Canada and in Ontario for the last few decades, we should strengthen penalties for these actions. We want to continue seeing a reduction in fatalities and injuries on the road. We need to have, however, as I've said, a multi-pronged strategy to actually substantially reduce the problems that are before us.

There are a number of comments that have been made about the bill. Adrienne Seggie, of Brantford, whose son was 21 years old when he was run over while crossing a Hamilton street last November, said measures introduced yesterday were only a good beginning. She said that she believes the legislation was rushed in an election year to appeal to voters, and said the government should have taken the time to draft a more proactive bill. "I don't feel it's enough" because the police still don't have the resources they need to do what has to be done.

Interestingly, the Toronto Star quotes York region police chief Armand LaBarge: "Impaired driving kills nearly five Canadians a day:

"'Each year 2.3 million Canadians operate motor vehicles while impaired. Impaired driving continues to be the number one criminal cause of death in our nation,' he added."

Again, I would urge this government to look at a multi-pronged strategy rather than simply relying on enforcement penalties.

We will need education and awareness in the tool bag of any minister who is going to move forward on this. We will need an allocation of funds, and I would hope that in the most recent budget, funds were allocated. If they weren't, they should have been and should be.

I know in my riding, when I ask the police about an enforcement problem, I'm told regularly that they're overextended. I talk to a probation officer in my riding who tells me that his experience is that the jails are quite full already. When people he is supervising on probation are in violation of their probation orders, they are simply ordered to have more probation. So I ask the government, in bringing this bill forward, how much more enforcement will actually arise from the increase in penalties that you've set out in this bill? Will it materially change the situation before us?

It was interesting that Brian Patterson, president of the Ontario Safety League, commented favourably about the legislation but noted as well—and I mentioned this in my earlier comments—"It could go further on the issue of nitrous oxide and vehicle modifications." That's something that the government had in its hands to actually move forward. It should have.

Canadian Taxicab Association treasurer Jim Bell says that stronger enforcement and impounding vehicles will help street racers to realize that they're putting other people's lives at risk. Jim Bell was talking in the aftermath of Tahir Khan's death. Tahir Khan was a taxi driver here in Toronto who died in a very tragic situation going through a wealthy area of Toronto. He was hit broadside by cars that were being driven by street racers and was killed on the spot. This was a man trying to support his family, trying to set up his life here in

Canada—truly dealing with a death that affected many people. Again, a needless and useless death.

I think I've talked about the non-regulatory measures that are required. I've talked about the potential here to strengthen the regulatory measures that have been put on the books and I've talked about the need for this society to look beyond the question of street racing and drunk driving to the whole question of urban design so that we can rely on transit and walking far more for transportation than we do today.

1750

It's interesting when you look at situations in other jurisdictions, as in Florida, where sprawl is a significant problem and where they have a very difficult time with seniors who shouldn't be driving but who, frankly, if their licences were taken away would be prisoners in their homes because it's miles and miles to get to any store.

We here will make for more dangerous drivers on the road in future if we don't deal with sprawl. We will make for more dangerous drivers on the road if we don't deal with addiction and the roots of addiction. We will have more dangerous drivers on the road if we don't take action to change our culture so that the very thought of street racing is something that is rejected in the way that drunk driving is today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. McNeely: I thank the member for Toronto-Danforth for, as usual, having a very in-depth analysis of the legislation and treating all the issues very seriously. Certainly issues that have been brought up today will be dealt with in committee. I would like to respond to a couple. Maybe I'll just start in the reverse order.

The nitrous oxide: We had a conference or a get-together, a round table, with people who were involved in street racing problems—insurance companies etc. This issue came up, but out of all the reported cases of street racing in Ontario, nitrous oxide is not known to be a factor. Using existing regulations in the Highway Traffic Act, police can charge racers with offences relating to vehicle and equipment standards. With the safety of any motor vehicle in question, the police have the authority to order a safety inspection of the vehicle. So from the information that we have, that is already taken care of.

To go to the other issue you mentioned in a minute and a half—we'll be able to deal with those a lot further down the road. But with blood alcohol levels of .05 to .08, drivers were eight times more likely to be involved in a collision than drivers who had not been drinking. So that is a section, the blood alcohol level, that we're addressing. In the first instance, the driver is suspended for three days. A day is defined as 24 hours. Before, it could be any time—today and tomorrow was the one day—but now it's 24 hours. In the second instance it's seven days, and they must undergo remedial measures. In the third or subsequent instance, the driver is suspended for 30 days, must undergo remedial measures and have an ignition interlock for six—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: I want to commend my colleague from Toronto-Danforth for outlining both his concerns and the issues that the government needs to take into account when the bill goes to public hearings. He did a very thorough review of not only the legislation that we're dealing with right now but what the possible changes could be, possible amendments that would strengthen the legislation, as has been the case, for example, in Manitoba.

I just want to reinforce a couple of things that my colleague made mention of during the course of his remarks.

First is the whole issue around the resources of police. There is no doubt that police are supportive of this legislation—so are we—but it is also very clear that in trying to enforce the law, we are going to have to find ways to support police services to allow them to do so. I think none of us should be under any illusion that the mere fact of passing a law is suddenly going to reduce street racing or deal with drunk drivers. The reality is, in order to make this legislation work, enforcement is going to be key, and a key part of enforcement is going to be the police resources at hand in all of our communities to be out on the streets, to be in a position either to be pulling drivers aside applying tests or pulling aside drivers who are also street racing.

Secondly, I think my colleague is quite correct when he talks about there being punitive measures here. We're not averse to that, but really we need to be changing a culture. The culture around street racing that is glamorized on television is going to be a really difficult one to address and is going to be one that requires some significant public education particularly targeted at young people so that they are very clear on the dangers and all of the possible very negative—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ramal: Thank you, Speaker, for giving me a chance to comment on the speech of the member from Toronto-Danforth. It was a good speech. He spoke about different elements. He talked about the safety of the public and the importance of enforcing laws about drinking and racing and penalizing people who are abusing the law.

He also mentioned seniors and public transit. We depend on his effort and his advocacy power to convince his leader to accept the subway to North York, because it's very important.

Mr. Leal: —kill that subway. That's what they want to do.

Mr. Ramal: Yes, the member from Peterborough heard him when was talking about safety. I know he's sincere and honest about it, but we have to make sure—it's important to create safety and also to make this an effective bill to protect the people of Ontario.

Again, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak. I'm willing to listen to what the opposite side has to say about our comments.

The Acting Speaker: Time for a response.

Mr. Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Ottawa–Orléans, Nickel Belt and London–Fanshawe for their commentary.

I'll go to the member from London–Fanshawe first, just to say that my leader, Howard Hampton, is a strong supporter of public transit and has never said that he would cancel the York subway line. I think it's useful and I thank him for giving me that opportunity to get it on the record.

The other thing I want to say—I appreciate the comment from the member from Ottawa–Orleans about nitrous oxide. I look forward to the committee hearings

on this matter and what you have say. There's a lot of sense in that. Let's have the witnesses forward and go through that. I hear that it's an issue that you are familiar with and have thought about and I look forward to having it sorted out in committee. I appreciate the kind and useful comments from the minister—sorry—member from Nickel Belt; hopefully minister again.

I think we're out of time.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, April 23, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Kuldip Kular, Jeff Leal,
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro, John O'Toole,
Ernie Parsons, Khalil Ramal
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Monday 23 April 2007

Lundi 23 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): We've discovered that the McGuinty government has reached new highs of arrogance and new lows of integrity. They are trying to keep their promise-breaking government afloat by handing out millions of taxpayers' dollars from their political slush fund without even bothering to ask for an application. There is no fair, open process. It is all backroom dealings and vague conversations. Many of the people who need the money never even know it exists, let alone actually get a chance to apply. Apparently, the price of admission to this political slush fund is a tie to the Liberal Party. Twice last week, the Minister of Citizenship publicly promised to release the criteria for these grants. If he has it, where is it? We can only assume they haven't produced it because it doesn't exist.

On Friday, our leader, John Tory, called for the Auditor General to look into the suspicious year-end slush fund spending by the McGuinty government. Today, the Globe and Mail supported that call and said the Provincial Auditor should take a tough look at where these millions have gone. If the McGuinty government has nothing to hide, they should support our call for that investigation. We will be filing a motion in the public accounts committee to have all the documents tabled and begin an investigation. If the McGuinty government has nothing to hide, they should support this motion. As Vice-Chair of the committee, I can tell you that we are ready to look for and find the truth. We believe that Ontarians deserve to know what happened to their money. We are ready to investigate and reveal the truth, because Dalton McGuinty won't.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Disabled adult children in Nipissing will now have the benefit of a new learning centre in our community thanks to our government's investment in a new, exciting, parent-driven initiative.

I had the privilege on Friday to join members of the Providing Adults with Developmental Disabilities Life-long Education, or PADDLE, program, and the Nipissing Association for Disabled Youth, NADY, to announce funding of \$138,000 through the Ministry of Community and Social Services for a new learning centre. The funding is being provided to this group of dedicated parents to help create a learning centre that will assist disabled adult children in Nipissing. The parents, who officially formed their organization two years ago, recognized a real need in the community for this kind of program. As members of this Legislature know, adult disabled children can only participate in the school system until the age of 21. At that time, they are no longer able to attend school, and are often left without activities or any meaningful form of programming.

The programming in Nipissing is modelled after a program that parents started in Brantford called Crossing All Bridges. The learning centre, which will be located at Chippewa Secondary School, will provide a program where disabled adult children will be able to continue to thrive socially, physically, emotionally and intellectually once they transition from school to the community.

There are various facets to this program, including a classroom facet, a life skills facet and physical fitness, as well as other outings for these students.

I'm convinced that this program will be a huge benefit to our community. These families struggle to provide a quality of life for their adult disabled children, and I think it's so important that we assist them.

I want to congratulate Cam Cepetelli, Sharon Walker, Lori Venasse and the whole team at PADDLE and wish them well with this wonderful program.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today as the integrity of Premier Dalton McGuinty and his ministers continues to be under fire:

Minister Takhar was reprimanded by the Integrity Commissioner for breaching the Members' Integrity Act, and still sits at the cabinet table;

Minister Chambers, who allows SUVs and fancy vacations to go ahead of the needs of vulnerable children and only acted after she was caught by the Ombudsman, is once again inked into the bad books of the Ombudsman for ignoring the needs of the children of our dedicated military men and women. They say the third time is the charm, so I'm sure Minister Chambers isn't done yet;

Minister Smitherman, who approved a \$2-million Ad-scram on medical wait times that the Ombudsman referred to as misleading and Advertising Standards Canada said made false claims;

Minister Caplan, who covers up a \$100-million lottery scandal by pulling in Liberal spin surgeons;

Dalton McGuinty continues to verge on the Ontario Liberal version of the Gomery inquiry, we see Minister Colle has set up a slush fund to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to organizations with Liberal ties. To try to diminish the importance of this situation, Dalton McGuinty refers to \$250,000 as "a pittance." Only Dalton McGuinty would refer to hard-working taxpayers' money as a pittance. What's next for Minister Colle? Stay tuned; we'll be finding out.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I rise on behalf of the more than 160,000 Torontonians with low and moderate incomes who live in Toronto Community Housing. Many live in homes that are crumbling and in need of urgent repair and refurbishment. Just last week, long-suffering tenants of two buildings staged a protest. Their building has an infestation of rats and mice and is in need of \$2 million of essential repairs. The price tag to repair all of Toronto Community Housing's properties is estimated to be \$300 million, but the money simply isn't there and the problems will only get worse if the repairs aren't made soon.

It's now up to the provincial government to step up to the plate. It was the province that downloaded the immense cost of social housing to the city of Toronto in 2002. Since then, the residents of Toronto Community Housing have been used like a political football between a city that doesn't have the money and a province that is neglecting its duty. After five long years, the residents of Toronto Community Housing have now reached the point where enough is enough. They have launched a campaign calling for the provincial government to finance the needed repairs. I am proud to support their campaign and echo their very clear message to this Liberal government: Accept their responsibility and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a decent home in good repair.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): One month ago, I started a competition for high school students in my riding, called the Climate Change Challenge. Students were asked to design a poster that encourages the public to reduce their individual carbon footprints.

The contest ended this weekend on Saturday, Climate Change Day, and it was a tremendous success. Many talented young environmentalists submitted some very inspiring and creative posters. I'm very proud of all of the students who participated in the competition. They

not only learned about climate change, but they made an active effort to share that knowledge with others through their work.

I would particularly like to congratulate the winners. The top prize was given to Liza Rozina from Cairine Wilson Secondary School, who also won the overall prize for her school. The other overall school winners were Salwa Haider from Gloucester High School, Pauly Joy Mulles from Lester B. Pearson High School, Ashley Merrill from Louis Riel High School and Charles Williams from Sir Wilfrid Laurier High School.

The posters will be uploaded to my site within the coming days, and I hope that everyone will visit the site to view the students' work. I would like to thank Enbridge for donating the wonderful prizes. And I thank Place d'Orléans, which allowed us to hold our awards ceremony in their mall. Chris Day, a news anchor from CTV, kindly participated as a guest presenter in the final awards ceremony. Lastly, I'd like to thank Dawn Stroz and Halima Mautbur from my office, who did a wonderful job.

I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in fostering more youth leaders for the environment by starting similar competitions for students in their ridings.

1340

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I had the opportunity today to meet with representatives of PAIRO, the Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario. I would like to welcome them to Queen's Park. I met with Ontario medical students Mario Marin and Matt Strickland. Matt is from Huntsville, in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. They are here at Queen's Park today to ask the province to defer interest accrual and repayment of OSAP loans until the end of their residency. Doing this would bring Ontario in line with other provinces who have already adopted such a policy, and the students say it would cost the provincial government approximately \$250,000 annually.

According to the finance minister, in response to questions about the Liberal end-of-year slush fund, \$200,000 is a pittance. So perhaps the Premier could give direction to the medical students as to where you pick up the application form for the \$250,000 pittance grant they are looking for. This money would enable Ontario to remain competitive in physician recruitment and retention and help with the current doctor shortage. It would also lessen the stress level of medical interns. If the Ontario Medical Students Association had known how to get one of your pittance fund applications, they could have applied.

Thirty-one groups, many of which were Liberal-friendly organizations, received grants from this government of varying amounts totalling \$20.4 million this year. But this, according to the Minister of Finance, is simply a pittance.

CANADIAN FORCES

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today to celebrate the safe return of seven soldiers from the Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment).

Applause.

Mrs. Jeffrey: Thank you. Tonight, I will be the guest of the commanding officer of the regiment and I will honour Captain Christopher Federico, Sergeant James Joseph Fallowfield, Master Corporal Andrea Katona-Smith, Master Corporal Rodger Murray Alexander Campbell, Corporal Shawn Denty, Corporal Roy Rich, Corporal Jason Vasquez, Sergeant Michael K. Kase and Master Corporal Martin Borczek: seven local heroes from my community who recently completed their tour of duty in Afghanistan and Darfur to return to their family, friends and community.

Thanks to the efforts of these brave individuals from my community, they've made significant progress in strengthening our collective efforts in southern Afghanistan, supporting the NATO mission and helping Afghans secure a peaceful, prosperous future that will improve the lives of ordinary Afghans. Our brave men and women are not only standing up for our interests by protecting our security but also engaging the world where it counts.

Tonight, I will be congratulating and thanking a few of our returning heroes. I am inspired and grateful for their spirit and selfless actions. I want to thank them for putting their lives at risk serving Canada and helping people throughout the world.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise today to celebrate a recent funding announcement in my riding that is not only beneficial to Hamilton but to the entire province as well. Over \$15 million is being dedicated to McMaster University's Initiative for Automotive Manufacturing Innovation. The McGuinty government is committed to research and innovation, and Hamilton is excited to be a leader of the project. When the Premier visited McMaster University to make this announcement, I could feel the buzz in the air. Knowing that Hamilton's research and innovation park will further enhance economic development and offer new opportunities to the best and the brightest was exhilarating.

I would like to recognize Dr. David Wilkinson of McMaster University and Dr. Michael Worswick of the University of Waterloo, who are the lead researchers committed to the innovation of our automotive industry. By researching and developing new technologies in Hamilton to produce lightweight, cost-competitive cars, Ontario's future as a global leader in auto and auto parts manufacturing will be strengthened. Producing reformulated metal alloys, polymers and composites will help meet the performance and cost requirements of the next generation of environmentally efficient cars. In addition to creating better materials, new fabrication processes

will require highly trained professionals, thus creating new jobs.

Speaking of innovation, my first grandson, Raine Eric, was born on Thursday. Congratulations to his mom, Andrea Marsales, and his dad, Jaan Lilles, and thanks to Women's College for the love and support of the future leader of Ontario, who entered the world at 7 pounds 14 ounces.

We're excited to have research done in Hamilton and we thank Premier McGuinty for his leadership in creating new economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough—Rouge River): The McGuinty government recognizes that acquiring language skills is the foundation of success for newcomers. It is vitally important that we support children in our schools and our communities in their transition to better communicate in English.

The McGuinty Liberals want to ensure that all hard-working Ontarians have the same access to prosperity through language programming, because, after all, our society is based on providing opportunity. One of the prerequisites to prosperity is often to have a solid comprehension of the English language.

Some Ontarians, particularly those new to Canada, need assistance through English-as-a-second-language programming. One of the best ways to provide this is in our schools. Our children often grow up speaking a variety of languages—a growing testament to our multi-cultural society. Not only does this benefit the children, but the entire family as a whole. The children often pass on what they have learned in school to their parents and grandparents. They become the gateway between generations.

That is why the McGuinty Liberals provide over \$226 million for ESL. That's a 25% increase since 2003, or over \$2,500 per eligible student. We are taking steps to ensure that all funds allocated for ESL are spent on students with ESL needs.

We will continue to provide the resources and the tools necessary so English-as-a-second-language programming is second to none.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I wonder if members might join me in boisterous applause for guests from the great northwest, Thunder Bay: former Regional Chief of Ontario, Charles Fox, and his friend and partner, Meladina Hardy.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to welcome the very first school I've had from my riding visiting Queen's Park. Unfortunately, I'm thanking them in ab-

sentia because they're out on a tour and they were going to take a photograph, but it's St. Paul Catholic High School from Nepean. We welcome them.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan is asking unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Parsons and Mrs. Van Bommel exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Parsons assumes ballot item 32 and Mrs. Van Bommel assumes ballot item 5, and that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 5.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe that we again have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee meeting times.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee meeting times. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the standing committee on justice policy be authorized to meet Wednesday, April 25, 2007, and Thursday, April 26, 2007, after routine proceedings and to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for the purpose of conducting public hearings on Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

The Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet

from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 23, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 326. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chan, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Oraziotti, David	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Ferreira, Paul	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Prue, Michael	Yakubski, John
Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 44; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PRE-ELECTION REPORT ON ONTARIO'S FINANCES RAPPORT PRÉÉLECTORAL SUR LES FINANCES DE L'ONTARIO

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm proud to rise on this historic day. I have today laid on the table the first-ever pre-election report on Ontario's finances to give Ontarians a transparent and accurate description of the province's finances before the next provincial election.

Ce premier rapport préélectoral sur les finances de l'Ontario donnera aux Ontariennes et Ontariens une description claire et précise des finances de la province avant les prochaines élections provinciales. En déposant le rapport préélectoral sur les finances de l'Ontario de 2007, nous fournissons à la population de la province un compte rendu détaillé de notre situation financière actuelle avant des élections générales.

With the tabling of the 2007 pre-election report on Ontario's finances, we're giving Ontarians a full account of our current fiscal situation before a general election. It's essential that the state of the province's finances be known before and not after an election so that no government can hide a deficit as it approaches an election. With this significant step forward, Ontario joins only a handful of jurisdictions around the world, and we will be the only Canadian province to provide this level of transparency and accountability before an election.

As members may recall, when we came into government in 2003, we found an obvious discrepancy between the Balanced Budget Act and the most recent financial updates provided by the province at the time. We asked former Provincial Auditor Mr. Erik Peters to assess the real state of the province's finances. What Mr. Peters found was not a balanced budget, but a deficit of some \$5.6 billion.

Mr. Peters had strong comments about the Balanced Budget Act. He said, "I urge the new government to consider legislation dealing with fiscal responsibility. The objective would be to improve accountability through greater transparency in and quality of budgets and updates such as the quarterly Ontario Finances. This approach," Mr. Peters said, "would be more effective in ensuring fiscal accountability than legislation that limits government's flexibility in responding to fiscal challenges."

It became crystal clear that there needed to be a new level of transparency and accountability in Ontario. Recall that before the last general provincial election, the previous government's approach to balancing its budget was to count on revenues from asset sales which would not materialize, while proceeding with tax cuts that Ontarians could ill afford. This is the reason why following former Provincial Auditor Erik Peters's review, our government passed the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, recognizing the importance of transparency and accountability. The act's true objective is to enhance the quality and the credibility of our democracy.

In tabling the 2007 pre-election report on Ontario's finances, we are respecting both the spirit and the letter of the transparency and accountability legislation. The report will provide voters with a better understanding of our province's finances. That understanding will go a long way toward strengthening our democratic system.

Ce rapport donnera aux électeurs une meilleure compréhension de la situation financière de la province, et cette compréhension renforcera notre système démocratique.

I was extremely proud to introduce the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act in 2004, and I am proud

today to deliver the pre-election report. It is essential that the real state of the province's finances be known before, and not after, an election. I made that statement nearly four years ago. The 2007 pre-election report on Ontario's finances fulfills that promise.

EARTH DAY

JOUR DE LA TERRE

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): Yesterday was Earth Day, and the beginning of Earth Week. You can be sure that Earth Day started small. A couple of individuals said, "Enough is enough. It's time to take care of our environment."

Just like so many powerful forces in our history, a simple idea evolved into a grassroots movement that kept growing and reaching more people, people who shared the belief that we couldn't continue to degrade and misuse the resources of our planet. With public awareness came action.

Today we are seeing the same grassroots commitment at the forefront in efforts to combat climate change. Climate change is the number one environmental issue of concern for Ontarians and Canadians. Scientists, economists, doctors and world leaders are all agreeing that we cannot afford to wait. These are extraordinary times, transformational times. We are taking action.

Soon our government will deliver a climate change plan for Ontario. It will have been worth waiting for. Our plan will speak to real people. It will make real differences in people's lives, and this plan will build on major steps our government has already taken.

Notre plan touchera réellement la population. Il changera vraiment la vie des gens et il sera fondé sur les mesures importantes que notre gouvernement a déjà prises.

Since 2003, our government has reduced greenhouse gases from coal-fired generating stations by 29%. Carbon dioxide emissions from those plants are below 1990 levels, the base year for the Kyoto Protocol. We are protecting the air we breathe.

We have introduced new and updated standards for 40 air pollutants and regulated seven large industrial sectors to lower their emissions. We have regulated 5% ethanol in gasoline to bring car emissions down, and our \$838-million investment in public transit in the GTA will encourage more people to leave their cars at home, reducing both smog and gridlock.

We have initiated the fastest-growing alternative energy program in North America, not only securing clean, green, renewable energy sources to power our province, but encouraging environmental innovation and technologies that will spur economic growth and grow tomorrow's jobs.

In these and other ways, our government has demonstrated to Ontarians our commitment to the environment, clean air and a bright future for our children.

Our plan to fight global warming is far-reaching and it is comprehensive. It is fully matched by our commitment

to clean water and safe land. Look at such unprecedented advancements as the Clean Water Act and the 1.8-million-acre greenbelt.

We have only one earth. It is our home, our heritage and our legacy.

There is a Kenyan proverb, "Treat this earth well for it has not been given to us by our parents. It has been loaned to us by our children." Yes, we must preserve and protect it for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

On Earth Day and every day I urge all Ontarians to be aware, to care and to act conscientiously for a cleaner, greener, healthier environment.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND
IMMIGRATION GRANTS

SUBVENTIONS DU MINISTÈRE DES
AFFAIRES CIVIQUES
ET DE L'IMMIGRATION

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): In this House, we share two very important responsibilities: We represent all Ontarians from every part of the province. Nous représentons tous nos chers Ontariens et Ontariennes de chaque région de notre belle province.

And we bear the responsibility of public investment, and that means we owe our hard-working Ontarians two things: Taxpayers' dollars must be well spent and well managed as we make Ontario a better place for all of its citizens. And we need to constantly improve the process by which investments are made. In this context, I wish to address the allocation of one-time capital funding by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

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Our responsibility is to partner and invest in projects that promote diversity, foster community involvement and embrace volunteerism. We're making communities stronger for both newcomers and for established and founding communities; we're investing in language training, community building, counselling services, volunteerism, and all of this to make urban and rural communities across Ontario stronger and more inclusive.

We also support active civic participation in all aspects of life, whether it's honouring our fallen soldiers on Remembrance Day, partnering with the other levels of government to commemorate the victims of the 1985 Air India tragedy or celebrating the contributions of thousands of Ontario volunteers and the Ontario Volunteer Service Award recipients, which we are currently doing throughout the province as we speak. We're proud to make investments that are designed to fulfill a high purpose, and that is to build a stronger Ontario for all.

By way of example, the KCWA—Korean Canadian Women's Association—Family and Social Services received funding to upgrade their office and counselling facilities. This will support programs to create commun-

ity for children and youth, abused women, volunteer programs and leadership building.

We're partnering with the Ireland Park Foundation in its commitment to honour the history of the Irish famine immigrants. We are supporting its mandate of preserving this rich heritage and its contributions to the development of Canada.

Frontier College, in partnership with the Lieutenant Governor of Canada, was able to provide summer literacy camps in northern Ontario for First Nations youth. These programs were designed to build literacy and life skills for aboriginal children and to offer activities such as reading, games, crafts and sports to help build self-esteem in our aboriginal communities.

Lastly, Settlement and Integration Services Organization of Hamilton is the largest provider of services to the thousands of newcomers who choose Hamilton as their home. We're helping to create a model facility to continue providing those settlement services, as well as a place of refuge and housing for those who need it.

I am proud to associate myself with these organizations and the work they do. Ontario is wonderfully diverse as a province.

Nous venons de 200 pays et nous parlons plus de 130 langues. Les nouveaux arrivants viennent du monde entier pour vivre en Ontario.

Our government has a solid track record of unprecedented progress in this sector of citizenship and immigration. We signed the first-ever Canada–Ontario Immigration Agreement, which increases federal spending by an additional \$920 million in Ontario. Our government passed Bill 124, the landmark legislation Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, which, by the way, the province of Manitoba announced that it has also introduced. We created Global Experience Ontario, an access and resource centre for the internationally trained, and established the first-ever Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

We are a province and community of blended cultures and backgrounds and we have a rich tradition of inclusion and compassion. Our government is committed to honouring our heritage, strengthening our diversity and investing in our communities, including newcomers. That is what this funding will do. It is true that governments of all stripes have moved forward with one-time capital investments in Ontario.

The process for addressing these investments must indeed be clear and helpful, so we have improved the process. Officials from my ministry have created a distinct application process that is more clear, helpful and accessible to all communities. This improved process will identify community needs and work to address these needs. The new application will be available online by the end of the week on my ministry's website. Community organizations will be able to submit application forms for future one-time capital allocations. These applications will have to fulfill the same mandate as previous capital funding; namely, to promote Ontario's diversity and heritage, foster community building, including volunteer participation, and celebrate Ontario's rich cultural fabric.

I want to thank members from both sides of the House for the concerns they have raised about the process. I welcome their suggestions as we move forward. In conclusion, I want to thank once again the diverse community groups that do so much to welcome newcomers and build communities throughout the province.

Je remercie nos communautés de nouveaux arrivants, avec qui nous établissons un Ontario prospère.

I want to thank all of the people of Ontario for joining us in this important work, and finally, Speaker, I thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I wish to respond to Minister Colle's Liberal slush fund confession. Essentially that's how we view this. This is an admission of guilt and nothing less. It's typical of the McGuinty government. They react after they've been caught with their hand in the cookie jar. But again, typically, they try to spin, instead of doing the right thing.

In this case, our leader, John Tory, has suggested calling in the Provincial Auditor. The existence of this fund was not publicized. It doesn't have a name. There's no formal application process. We've had the Treasurer of the province treat these monies with disdain, suggesting that the \$200,000 of hard-earned tax money is a pittance. You're handing out monies to an animal welfare group. What's the connecting link with respect to many of these monies being transferred? Provincial Liberal Party membership. We're talking about potentially millions of tax dollars going into a Liberal slush fund. I have to say that our party, and I expect the third party as well, is not going to accept this so-called explanation here today, three paragraphs of Liberal spin. The minister needs to call in the auditor and get rid of the odour surrounding this situation.

EARTH DAY

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of the Environment for Earth Day, which was celebrated yesterday by communities all over the world. The significance of this year's Earth Day is paramount. Each of us needs to work towards reducing our individual ecological footprint, but this awareness needs to be accompanied by real leadership, leadership we have not seen from Dalton McGuinty.

The Minister of the Environment encourages people to be environmentally friendly this Earth Day. But based on their record, she has clearly failed to lead by example. Despite Dalton McGuinty's election promise to divert 60% of its garbage, we are lagging badly behind that promise. The Environmental Commissioner says there is a real price to pay for this broken promise, and it's not just about the environment; it's about credibility and leadership, neither of which this present Liberal government has.

PRE-ELECTION REPORT ON ONTARIO'S FINANCES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Finance. First, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and his staff, particularly Sarah Hanafy, for arranging the briefing with caucus this past week and the heads-up on the minister's remarks today. I very much appreciate the co-operation of the minister's office and the minister himself.

With respect to the item that's before the assembly this morning, I certainly would have preferred this process had our leader, Mr. John Tory, been involved in the process, and the third party, Mr. Hampton, as well. I think the minister knows that some time ago our leader wrote a very reasonable proposal about how this process should move forward. I don't think we were actually given much of a response, certainly not an adequate response, if this is truly about ensuring that the proper numbers are put forward. There would be a lot more credibility to the process had all three parties been involved.

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Speaking about the auditor as well, I do hope the auditor will have all the information that is required for his review. I hope the minister is undertaking to make sure that it is all provided. But at the same time, I would actually like to see the auditor have the time to look at the funding coming from the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, as my colleague Mr. Runciman just said a few moments ago. The minister knows full well that in the last three Liberal budgets the auditor has had very strong comments about end-of-year slush funds, the last-minute spending sprees. You might say that pirates on shore leave would show more restraint than the Dalton McGuinty government when it comes to spending; in fact, would probably cause less damage to the provincial economy. Nonetheless, we do hope that the auditor will have a chance to look at some of the last-minute slush funds we saw in this most recent budget, including the money from the Minister of Immigration that seems to be targeted, as my colleague Mr. Runciman said, more to Liberal Party contacts than to the public good. So I hope we'll have the undertaking of the Minister of Finance to recommend to the auditor that he look through that fund as closely as he possibly can, because after all, these are the taxpayers' funds. We've seen great disregard from the McGuinty government, and when we see spending skyrocket from \$68 billion to \$91 billion in one term without results for taxpayers, it's time for a change.

EARTH DAY

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I'll be speaking today about Earth Day. Yesterday I was at the Earth Day rally here in downtown Toronto, and the grassroots that the Minister of the Environment was talking about were there. What were they speaking about, Minister? They were speaking very directly, very clearly

about their rejection of nuclear power, about their demand for action on Kyoto, for action now. What did you stand up and talk about today in this House? The wonderful record of your government. The simple reality is that you are embarked on a \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme that has been exempted from environmental assessment, that you have written regulations for to get out of the way. Do you think the grassroots support that? Do you think the grassroots don't want an environmental assessment of one of the biggest mistakes in Ontario's history? They do; you don't.

Minister, since I've been here, I've been pressing you for action on climate change. I've heard from you and I've heard from Minister Gerretsen about the fact that you have it taken care of, that it has been spread out amongst the ministries, that everybody is doing their part. We don't have a plan. You say you're going to bring one; I tell you, when I read Murray Campbell's column in the *Globe*, he tells me that you're talking about 2020. Maybe the 1990 levels then; maybe 10% below. But 1990 is not Kyoto, Minister; it is not. You know how urgent the problems are.

Your government has betrayed the environment. Your government has betrayed the grassroots. Your government has no credibility on these issues.

PRE-ELECTION REPORT ON ONTARIO'S FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): First of all, to the Minister of Finance on his pre-election report: very interesting reading, because what you have shown in your pre-election report is that we are going to run very tiny surpluses over the next three given years in total; for the three years, \$300 million only. You are doing that on the backs of the municipalities, because there's nothing in here about the \$3.2 billion of downloading that you're not going to upload. You're doing it on the backs of the poor, because there's nothing in here to talk about the phase-in which you have put beyond 2010. The press has asked you to commit what you were going to do with this \$300 million, and you would not do it. You would not even tell them how your party is going to unfold its election promises or whether you were going to make more promises than the \$300 million.

Your program is based on a whole bunch of assumptions which already are out of date. I point out on page 8 the Canadian dollar, which you said should be, if it goes above 86 cents—it traded at 89 cents all last week. About crude oil, which you said, if it stays at \$61 a barrel—it traded at \$63 a barrel all last week. I don't know what kinds of assumptions you're using. The press were highly skeptical, and so are we.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: The minister

has stood in this House today and has given a total non-answer to the mess that he himself and his party have created. He promised last week in this Legislature, and outside in scrums, that he would produce the applications that were made. No applications were produced. He said last week that he would outline the criteria that he used in order to approve these 50-plus organizations, and nothing at all was said about that today.

He said he would talk about the expectations of performance and where those monies are going to be spent that were given away last year and this year, and there was absolutely nothing done on that. He promised last week to explain the very Liberal connections of the recipients, and nothing at all was said about that today. Last week, the finance minister said that the millions of dollars that were given out in total, and the \$200,000 in particular, were a mere pittance. There was no comment from you about whether or not this is a mere pittance.

You know, the press has termed this whole nefarious scenario "Collegiate," and I want to tell you, it is Collegiate. It leaves a bad taste in your mouth, and no amount of brushing from you is going to remove it. If you really want to remove it, then you should set up a non-partisan citizen group to vet these, and you should have them choose the best groups, not the ones that you choose and your party chooses based on Liberal connections.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Is there a doctor in the House? Indeed, there are many of tomorrow's doctors, representatives from the student section of the Ontario Medical Association and the Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario. There they are.

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce to the Legislative Assembly, sitting in the members' east gallery, an old friend and current city of Thunder Bay councillor, Mr. Aldo Ruberto.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Today we've heard of your application process and application form after the fact. Elvis has left the building with the money, and millions of taxpayer dollars later, you're going to now do something about it. The real issue is how taxpayers can possibly know if any of this money actually got to some of the purposes that you were describing in your statement earlier on.

We have the International Seniors Club of Brampton. It received \$100,000 from this so-called year-end reinvestment fund, which is actually a slush fund. We've heard earlier that what you did was you received, by your own admission, hundreds of people who got in touch with you. Then, when the Minister of Finance called to say that they were just awash in money, that all the children with autism and the farmers had been looked after, you decided who got the money.

Can the minister please explain to us how he became aware that the International Seniors Club of Brampton was looking for money and whether or not this club actually submitted an application form?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Our government has had a proud record of investing in newcomer communities, volunteer-based communities in all parts of this province. We have gone out of our way to ensure that everybody feels welcome and included in this province. That's why we've made these investments that were long overdue in making these communities stronger and more inclusive in this province.

Mr. Tory: Again, a total non-answer. What I asked for was: Was there an application form from the International Seniors Club of Brampton that backed up their request for \$100,000 in taxpayers' money? We know, from previous experience last week, that one group had a meeting arranged with you by Maria Minna, a former Liberal cabinet minister in Ottawa. When the questions came up about that, you then wrote to them or phoned them and said, "You'd better submit an application form so we can make this look better than some kind of Liberal Party inside job."

The International Seniors Club has, on its board of directors, one Atma Singh Gill, who is also the president of the Liberal Party of Canada Riding Association in Mississauga-Brampton South, a riding represented by a Liberal MP, Navdeep Bains: one more organization with ties to the Liberal Party getting public money without any backup or documentation at all. Will the minister please tell us the basis upon which this group, the International Seniors Club, received \$100,000 in taxpayers' money?

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Hon. Mr. Colle: There are many exceptional community groups throughout this province that are trying to deliver important services so that seniors don't feel isolated. This one organization that the member is raising in question is a locally based organization that is renting space from the city of Brampton, that is at the grassroots, trying to ensure that these forgotten seniors who come from different parts of South Asia now have a program and are included in activities in this centre. They are developing this program and centre to reach out to more programs. These are the kinds of services we're investing in.

Mr. Tory: Part of the problem we have here is that these forgotten seniors all seem to have memberships in the Liberal Party, positions in the Liberal Party and so on. We had two groups last week and now a third one

today that seem to have as one of their interests, in any event, advancing the interests of this government, and all three got money from a political slush fund.

For two of them last week, you said that you would produce paperwork to back up their application for money. Now, having said you would do that, you're refusing to do so. As a result, there is a cloud hanging over this government and a smell in this building and well beyond with the taxpayers about the fact that you won't do this.

Will the minister come clean, show us the paperwork, show us the application form, show us that in fact you did anything at all to make sure this money actually went to providing the services you just talked about for lonely seniors or whatever else? That's all we're asking for: a little bit of accountability, a little bit of transparency. Show us the forms; show us the process.

Hon. Mr. Colle: We continually have the Leader of the Opposition questioning the members of any organization because someone in that organization may belong to some party. That is a right of anybody: to belong to a political party.

For instance, we have the Ireland memorial park we're building at the bottom of Bathurst Street to honour the victims of the potato famine. The members of that board come from the Conservative Party and the NDP. In fact, a former controller of SuperBuild is a director of the Ireland Park. I don't see anything wrong with that because the project is worthwhile.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question?

Mr. Tory: My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship. I haven't asked you any questions about that one yet—you're obviously worried about that one—but we'll get to it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Finance.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: If you haven't figured out that when one of the organizations has its office at the residence of the president of the riding association and the candidate for the Liberal Party is on the board, come on. Get with it.

Let's ask about the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, a different issue. They received \$250,000 from the political slush fund. Can the minister tell us what due diligence was done on this organization? Did they have to provide proof of financial viability? Did they have to provide proof of appropriate fiscal management systems, required to account for the hundreds of thousands of dollars in public funds? Did they have to prove that they had an appropriate board and management structure? By the way, Minister, these are requirements of your very own newcomer settlement program. Can you tell us: Did the Ontario Khalsa Darbar have to provide that information before you gave them \$250,000 of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Our mandate and the mandate of my ministry—and a proud one—is to help newcomer communities integrate and reach out to the greater community. In fact, this is a perfect example. At this Darbar

at Derry and Dixie, what they've done is they now invite the Peel police force to come in to learn about the Sikh religion, which they're very proud of.

Thousands of people come every day to get food from the kitchen at the Darbar. There are thousands of volunteers at this temple. They're proud of being Canadians, but they're also proud of their Sikh heritage. We have invested in the best of both worlds, the volunteerism here by the Sikh community in the Darbar and the great outreach they're trying to make to the schools of Peel region because they want to share their great religion with the children of Peel region. They want to share their great charity with the greater community. I'm proud to invest in the Darbar.

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The person the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, his nephew, is a candidate for—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I remind members that points of order are not points of debate, and during question period we do not need to hear points of debate.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: What the minister is forgetting is that there's also another part of your mandate that is very important, which is that you have to show every bit of care you can, every single day, about how you distribute the taxpayers' money. Now, had this organization—the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, which I'm sure does some very good work—provided this information to you that I asked about, proof of financial viability, a proper board and so on, you would have known that the Ontario Khalsa Darbar has been embroiled in a court case since 2006 in which the board of directors of this organization has failed to produce financial and corporate records. You would have been aware that there are allegations outstanding that some \$2.5 million in membership fees are not reflected in the organization's books. This is a matter that's still before the courts. We don't know if it's true or not, but you would know there are big issues about the financial management of this organization.

My question is this: Before you handed them over a quarter of a million in taxpayers' money, were you aware of this litigation involving a dispute about their financial management?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I'm not going to be the judge and jury of something before the courts.

This organization and this gurdwara has been in existence since 1973. It's the largest gurdwara in Ontario. It has had an excellent record—again, a community kitchen, providing food for the hungry who come in there every day. There are literally, as I've said, thousands of volunteers who are doing great work in that.

There are athletics. They are building a museum and a resource centre in the front of their gurdwara so that they can invite members of the greater Peel community to come and share with them what their beliefs are and how they can live better together in the community. That's

what I looked at. You can look at potential legal cases. I've looked at the track record since 1973 of doing a lot of good volunteer work in our community.

Mr. Tory: I only asked the minister if he thought it was important that he should have known there was a court case involving the very question of the financial management of this organization before he handed them \$250,000 of taxpayers' money. You obviously, by not answering yes, you knew about it, or no, you didn't, don't want to answer.

Now, this very same grant was reported in the South Asian Observer on Friday, April 20, 2007. In that story, the journalist who wrote it, Jasjit Singh Bhullar, said, "This was ... the direct result of the community electing three legislators. 'We should continue to help them in the future as well,' he added."

This looks, again, like he's making an observation that you have to be involved in the Liberal Party, you have to make donations, as we've seen, in order to get this money. There's a clear suggestion of a quid pro quo between political Liberal involvement and getting this taxpayers' money. Will the minister explain? If it wasn't for partisan political purposes, why would you not have had a process pursuant to which you would have known that these people were embroiled in a big dispute about their own financial management before you handed them a quarter of a million—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?
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Hon. Mr. Colle: Members of this Legislature come from all different backgrounds. They are Muslims, Sikhs, Catholics, Protestants. They all have equal standing. All of the communities we represent are very proud of the fact that we've made it to this place. So I don't see anything wrong with the members of this gurdwara being proud of the fact that they have three Sikh members sitting in this Legislature.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Last week, people across Ontario learned that the McGuinty government has been doling out significant amounts of public money to Liberal-friendly groups and organizations, money that you've shovelled out the door with no formal application process, no criteria, no transparency and no accountability. My question is this, Minister: When were you and other members of the McGuinty government first alerted about the problems with these grants, and what did you do about it?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Our government is proud of the investments we've made right across this province. We've made investments in St. Catharines, we've made investments in Welland, we've made investments across the north with our literacy camps for First Nations children. We are making investments based on the promotion of diversity, heritage enhancement and enhancement of volunteerism. We make these investments because we feel there's a need, and these organizations, many com-

munity-based, big and small, are deserving of government partnership.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, the question was very specific. Problems were raised, issues were raised about some of these grants. One of the people who raised them is here today. He is an Iranian-Canadian journalist, Sayeed Sultanpur. On February 9, he wrote to the Minister of Finance asking for an interview so that questions could be answered about some of the problems with the \$200,000 grant to the organization that calls itself the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre. He was turned down. On April 4, Mr. Sultanpur wrote to the Premier, the finance minister and you, asking the McGuinty government to “shed light on the grant.” He received no response then either.

So my question is this: Mr. Sultanpur was clearly telling you there were some problems. Why did you ignore him? Why did you ignore the questions that he was raising until they were raised here in the Legislature last week?

Hon. Mr. Colle: When a government invests in worthy projects of all descriptions, big and small, as I've given some examples—we invest in the AWIC centre in the Don Mills area, where there's an incredible group of women who help out low-income families in that area—there are many questions sometimes raised about whether or not they need more money or less money or whether this group is viable or not. But remember, we're dealing with sometimes emerging organizations that are newcomer-based and they're trying to develop a capacity to invest in diversity, enhance volunteerism and provide services. We always attempt to ensure that they deliver those services to the best of their ability.

Mr. Hampton: Mr. Sultanpur was very specific about some of the questions and some of the issues related to this \$200,000 grant. He says, “I'm writing to ask these questions. No other organization in the Farsi-Persian community was informed that there were grants available.”

He points out that 20 different organizations knew nothing about this, but this organization that had just been granted charitable status as an animal protection organization somehow got the grant. He wanted to know why someone who claimed that he was a good friend of the finance minister and had a long-time relationship with the finance minister—that's why he was able to get the grant.

Minister, those are serious questions. They were raised back in February; they were raised April 4; they were raised April 17. They were raised with the Premier, the Minister of Finance, you and the Minister of Health. Why did no one in the McGuinty government look at these issues and say, “Maybe we'd better take a look at this, and maybe we'd better”—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Very clearly, my ministry has ensured that attention was given to these newcomer communities, who in many cases came here with nothing

in their pockets, worked hard, have become lawyers. I know that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I know that all members would like to hear the response of the minister, as I would.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The members opposite sometimes don't appreciate the fact that this province is made up of immigrants. Many came with nothing but an empty suitcase and the eagerness to work in this country. Some of them have worked very hard and have achieved success, and now they want to given back to the newest immigrants who are coming. We as a government want to encourage that type of community involvement so new groups can help deliver the diversity inclusion services that are needed. We invest in these groups, and we try to the best of our ability to do this. That's why we've even improved the process now by setting up this registry so that all groups—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

New question, leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Again, to the Minister of Citizenship: These questions are not going to go away. Mr. Sultanpur works with a number of organizations in the Iranian community. He supports them. He does all kinds of good work. The question he was asking you is—this Iranian-Canadian community centre doesn't represent the Iranian community. They refuse to answer questions from other organizations and members of the Iranian community about what they do and how they got this money.

As I say, the group registered as a charity to protect animals, not as an organization to service people in the Iranian community, only three weeks before they got the grant. As he points out, this group has very partisan ties to the Liberal Party. So he wants to know about the fairness of this. He wants to know for the benefit of other Iranian groups and organizations. What conclusion should working families across Ontario draw from your refusal to answer these basic questions?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member's facts are incorrect. That organization was registered in 2005, and it got its status. Its letters of patent demonstrate that it's established to help newcomers and to establish a community centre for the Iranian community.

The other issue about his reference to animal protection was a clerical error made by Revenue Canada or in the process of going to the second step. In many organizations, in every community, there are dozens and dozens of different groups who claim to be the most responsible. We don't say that one isn't and one is. We try our best to assess which one is going to try to deliver services, is dedicated towards reaching out to newcomer communities or establishing volunteer organizations. We try to do our best. But to decide totally—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, here is the reality: The McGuinty government has been handing out significant sums of public money—a quarter of a million dollars

here, a quarter of a million dollars there—to organizations that are clearly linked to the Liberal Party. There's been no formal application process so that other organizations could apply, there have been no clear criteria, and there has been no transparency and no accountability. You and the Premier and the Minister of Finance knew that questions were being raised about this granting of money, yet you tried to ignore it and you did nothing about it.

Minister, it is time for some transparency and accountability. Will you make the list of groups who got the year-end grants public? Will you explain what they have done with these grants? And will you tell us what were the criteria upon which these grants were based in the first place?

1450

Hon. Mr. Colle: This year's grants have been on the ministry website with the names of the groups and the contribution made by the government of Ontario. It's been on the website for the last five or six days. The ones from the year before were made public in a very open and transparent way. In some cases, members of his own party were there when I was making the contribution—to the Afghan Association of Ontario, for instance; your member from Beaches–East York was there with me. So it's been very public and the criteria that I do it for are based on building more inclusion, more diversity, promoting volunteerism, community building and recognizing our heritage in this great province. Those are the criteria that are used to ensure that these principles of inclusion—who we are—are now incorporated into many different parts of this province and many different communities.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, you might want to check your records. We just did. The Iranian Canadian Community Centre got its charitable status on March 1, 2006, and then they got the money on March 20, 2006—not even three weeks later. Now, it's true the Minister of Finance calls this money “a pittance”—a pittance of money here. Let me tell you, a quarter of a million dollars is not a pittance for hard-working families across Ontario, and it's not a pittance to organizations that really do want to provide some community services.

Minister, I say again, it is time for the McGuinty government to actually answer the questions. It is time for some accountability and transparency. Minister, will you make the list of the groups who got year-end grants public? Will you explain what the criteria were? And will you tell us, please, what that money is being used for—money for, for example, the Iranian Canadian Community Centre?

Hon. Mr. Colle: That centre in question was established in 2005—that's the first step—and then a year later they went for their charitable status. You don't have to have charitable status to be eligible. The critical thing here is that there are so many excellent organizations that provide newcomer settlement services, like the Maytree Foundation, like CultureLink—excellent organizations that also promote volunteerism. That's why

we invest in community organizations like senior centers that promote volunteerism and also recognize our heritage. That's what we're doing. We're investing in the Buxton centre near Chatham-Kent. It is the first settlement of black slaves who came across into Ontario back in 1850. Those are the criteria. Our heritage—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

Mr. Tory: My question, again, is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He keeps trying to make this about these groups and about inclusion when, in fact, what we're after here is some accountability for the taxpayers' money.

We've heard that you gave the \$2,000 to the Iranian Canadian Community Centre. We've heard that the contact person is the president of the Richmond Hill Liberals and the Liberal candidate is on the board of directors. Well, if it's possible, it gets much worse. According to the corporate filing with Corporations Canada, there are seven members on the board of directors of this organization. Guess how many of them are contributors to the Liberal Party of Ontario? Guess. It's seven out of seven who contribute to the Liberal Party, including \$700 from Andy Bakhtiari, who donated \$700 to the Vaughan-King Liberal association.

My question to the minister is this: Will you now come clean and admit that this grant, on which there were no criteria, there was no application, was given to further the partisan political interests of your government? Stand up and admit it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Leader of the Opposition is again trying to say that membership or donations to a political party is what these important community organizations are all about.

If you look at the many organizations and institutions that we've partnered with, they have members of boards of directors from all political parties—the Conservative Party and the NDP. That shouldn't be a reason for exclusion. We looked at the need to ensure that community groups that wanted to invest in more community inclusion, more enhancement of diversity, should not be excluded because a member belonged to one party or another.

Mr. Tory: There isn't a soul who has been arguing that membership in any political party should exclude anybody, but what we are saying is this: Surely when you have a situation like this, for example, where seven out of seven directors, 100% of the directors, are contributors to the Liberal Party, it underlines the reason why you should have asked for documentation, you should have asked some basic questions, before you gave them \$200,000 in taxpayers' money. The Minister of Finance thinks \$200,000 is a pittance. We don't. That's bigger than the mortgages most people in this province have on their homes. They don't think it's a pittance.

So my question is this: Last week, you said that there was documentation. Will you bring it forward and produce it so we can see what questions you asked before

you gave this organization, with 100% of the members of its board Liberal contributors, \$200,000 of hard-earned taxpayers' money? Will you produce the documents?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I don't know if the member opposite is saying that before government undertakes any partnership with any organization, we should do a political check on everybody. Is that what he's saying?

If you look at the organizations across this province, these organizations come from all walks of life, as they always have. They're there, and we judge them on what their intention is to provide those services. Many organizations have no political affiliation whatsoever. Many are NDP. Many are Conservative. We look at what they deliver, not what their political affiliation is.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Last year, Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services received a grant for nearly \$24,000 from your ministry—so-called year-end funds. Will you table in this House any internal documents or application forms that you considered before extending the grant, specifically outlining the criteria that made you choose this group over all the others that you rejected?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the member referred to Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services. They are one of our newcomer settlement partners. We have about 80 in the province. What we did is, we made funds available to all of them for sectoral improvements, which they've never had for 15 years; in other words, fixing up their offices, fixing up their washrooms, making them more accessible. We made amounts of money available to—I can't remember the exact number, but out of the 80, the majority of them got some one-time funding basically to repair and fix up their services. They were one of the ones that received, I think, \$23,000.

1500

Mr. Prue: There are hundreds of organizations that you have left out, struggling to do good work every year without any help from your government. ICNSS has one very strong advocate, though, in your caucus: the member for Mississauga West. The member for Mississauga West has read 19 petitions in the House calling for more government funding for the group. His spouse is also the executive director of that group.

Organizations struggling for cash don't like the way this looks. If there are clear reasons why this organization got funding while others did not, you need to table the documents—or shall we just go with the new Liberal slogan, "Membership in the Liberal Party has its privileges"?

Hon. Mr. Colle: That is a new low.

As I said, these are newcomers and SP partners—we call them newcomer settlement providers—that have been partners with our ministry for 10, 15 years. Some of them received money going back that far, and what all of them did was put forward a request based on their sectoral needs—Afghan Association of Ontario, African Community Services of Peel, Arab Community Centre of

Toronto, Bloor information services and AWIC. They all did. There were about 80 of them that did it. The ministry staff looked at their needs and, based on their needs, gave them an allocation of money to ensure that their facilities were upgraded.

The one that you condemn is an excellent organization in Peel region, like the other—

Mr. Prue: I didn't condemn them.

Hon. Mr. Colle: You did condemn them, and that's shameful. These organizations—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Drinking and driving are a fatal combination. This is a fact that has been proven time and again. Indeed, the majority of Ontarians accept this and make the right choice by drinking responsibly and ensuring they have alternate means to get to their destinations when they have had a few drinks. Sadly, not everyone has learned this important lesson. There are still those who drink to excess and get behind a wheel. Every time they do this, they put their lives and the lives of all those around them at risk.

In rural parts of the province like my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh and urban centres like Windsor, people need to use Ontario roads to get to work, to a show or to bring their kids to a sports game. We must, as a government, do all we can to ensure that our roads are safe.

Minister, you recently proposed legislation that will toughen the laws on drinking and driving. What additional tools will this legislation give to our community police forces to assist them in their important work of keeping our streets safe?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh for his advocacy on the part of his constituency.

If anybody read the papers this weekend, they know that there were a significant number of people who died, and unfortunately there seems to be the suspicion of speed and alcohol being involved.

Every hour of every day, it's two people who die and 10 who are seriously injured on our roads, and that is unacceptable. We do have safe roads; we need to make them safer. This new legislation, if accepted as proposed, will in fact do that. What we'll do is get to the folks who are in the .05 to .08 range, or the "warn" range. These are the people who are the repeat offenders. We will change the suspension laws—make it longer—and what we will then do is get to the behaviour. If we can separate the behaviour of drinking from the behaviour of driving and find a way—and one of the ways to do it is with the interlock ignition program and mandatory education, and that is being proposed in this bill.

Mr. Brownell: Minister, crimes perpetrated with vehicles are still far too commonplace. Are you sure that this legislation will strengthen the tools of our police forces and make the perpetrators of such crimes think twice before endangering themselves and the public at large?

These crimes, of course, are not limited to drinking and driving. Sadly, there is small contingent of the population who choose to get their thrills at the expense of the safety of themselves and anyone nearby.

Street racing is a selfish, thoughtless act that ends lives. As a parent, I can only imagine the heartbreak mothers and fathers of victims of street racing must feel when they get that call in the night, saying that their child's future was ended because of a senseless act of hooliganism.

There is no cause or excuse for street racing in our society, especially when there are so many safe alternatives for entertainment and competitiveness. Street racing is wrong, and any legislation concerning road safety must address it severely. Minister, what provisions are there in this legislation to tackle the scourge of street racing directly?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: This legislation that has been introduced would provide for a seven-day roadside suspension and a seven-day suspension of the vehicle as well. It actually puts in place the toughest laws in all of Canada. Minimum fines will go from \$200 to \$2,000; maximum from \$1,000 to \$10,000. We're going to get our message out that street racing, stunt driving, is totally unacceptable in this province and will not be tolerated. At the same time, we'll look to the education component as well and look to how we can work with young people around recreational driving with the Ontario Provincial Police program called ERASE.

There are ways and means where we can work together, but the bottom line is that if you're going to do street racing and you're going to do it in our province, you're going to pay. We'll take your licence, we'll take your car and we will fine you so that you cannot do it again.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It concerns, of course, the year-end slush fund and the millions going out the door with no accountability.

On the weekend, we got some indication as to the standard the Premier applies to all of this. He was quoted as saying that the minister should be cut some slack because, to quote the Premier, "He didn't think he'd had a lot of time when he was approached with this and had to make some quick judgment calls."

Would the minister not agree that the issue here really isn't how fast you shovel the money out the door? We'll leave aside the whole argument about whether it's a

pittance; we'll leave aside the whole argument about whether, if you had so much money left over, there aren't some other people who might have benefited from it too. The issue isn't how fast you can shovel it out the door but how carefully you spend it on behalf of the people out there, whom we all represent, who worked so hard to earn it.

Do you now agree, with respect to this list of grants, that you should have had a process in place, you should have had proper application forms in place and proper due diligence, before you gave the money out, and that you've now gotten yourself involved in a process that reflects very badly on government and on the members of this Legislature? Would you agree you should have done that in respect of these grants? Yes or no?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Our government is very proud of the fact that we've gone in a very aggressive way toward ensuring that all these communities that have been ignored for too long—and I'm not blaming any level of government or any party. These communities have been living on a shoestring for decades. There are such excellent settlement workers all across this province. From Thunder Bay to Cornwall, we heard them and we said, "We're going to give you resources."

We're not shovelling money out the door. What we're doing is that we're hearing that plea for help from these settlement workers who have gone without proper bathroom ventilation; they've gone without access. They hear the pleas of the newcomers, so we have given them resources to try and provide those services.

I agree that the process needs to be improved, and we moved to make that better. I appreciate your comments about the need to make the process better, and we've now established this process on our website for registration for capital grants.

Mr. Tory: With that tiny admission, which I appreciate, don't you think, then, if we want to enhance confidence in the people here in this place, in the political process and in the work you claim you're trying to do with this money, that when you have a situation when, for example, 100% of the board of directors of one of the organizations you gave money to are contributors to the Liberal Party, you should at the very least, going back to where you didn't have a process—no due diligence, no application, no nothing, and to quote the Premier, the only problem was that you rushed to get the money out the door—he said that, not me—then refer all these matters, and you should co-operate, to the public accounts committee and to the Auditor General so they can look at the ones going back and satisfy themselves that it was all on the up and up because you didn't do your homework? Will you agree to do that?

1510

Hon. Mr. Colle: Speaker, he always points to something that's convenient for him. One of the biggest contributions that the people of Ontario made—and we're very proud of the contribution we made—was to the United Jewish Appeal. They're going to raise almost

\$300 million to build an incredible series of complexes to help the disabled, help Holocaust remembrance. There are nine members who donated to the Conservative Party on their board. We didn't ask that before those donations went out. We know that the United Jewish Appeal, just like the Islamic Institute of Toronto, is made up of good people doing excellent work. That's what we judge on: their work and their contribution, not on which party their board of directors belongs to.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, today you stood up and said that anybody getting a new grant will get it for diversity and heritage, for community building and volunteerism, or for enhancing and strengthening the cultural fabric of this province. With that in mind, can you explain why the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, using funds supposedly dedicated for helping new Canadians settle in this province, gave half a million dollars to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I'm very glad to answer that question because baseball is a great part of Canadian heritage—Fergie Jenkins. The national baseball hall of fame is a national shrine for all the great history and culture related to baseball. We have invested in making that hall of fame more accessible for the disabled community. We are making investments in creating a museum that's interactive. We have the first Japanese Canadian who was interned during the 1940s. Vancouver Asahi is also in that hall of fame.

Whether it's baseball or other heritage projects, these are part of what our communities are based on. Whether it's athletics or music, culture, art, these are valuable things that make up our fabric in Ontario, and baseball—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: Again to the minister: Organizations across this province struggle every day to find ways to help new Canadians. They're constantly told by you and your ministry that money is not available. Imagine their shock when they learn that funding supposedly designated for their needs went to a baseball museum. This funding may help the local Liberal MPP hold on in a tight election race, but can you explain how it will help new Canadians struggling to settle in Canada and, if so, will you table the documents that led you to that conclusion?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've been in the mosques. I'm in the coffee shops. I'm on the TTC buses. I see the real eagerness of our newcomer communities. That's why I've reached out to increase investment like never before in newcomers. For 20 years, our newcomers were starved in this province. We fought to get the \$920 million to improve our newcomers. We've increased newcomer settlement programs that have never been increased before. We've increased bridge training programs. We invest \$34 million in helping newcomers achieve professional expertise. No government has done more for

helping immigrants in this province than we have in the last two years.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, as part of our government's commitment to the children's mental health sector, you recently announced a new investment of \$24.5 million to address gaps in local service needs as well as to reduce wait times.

I understand that in the last 15 years, the children's mental health sector has received two base increases. Both of those base increases were provided by our government in the last three years because for 12 long years the Tories and NDP did not raise by one cent children's mental health funding. Minister, can you please share with us what this additional investment will mean for the children's mental health sector?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I want to thank the member from Mississauga East for his advocacy in this area. In fact, what he says is correct: 12 years of neglect by previous governments and an absolute freeze of children's mental health funding, but we have been very pleased as a government. Our first increase in children's mental health was in our 2004 budget, where we announced an increase of \$25 million, which grew to \$38 million in 2005-06. This increase has actually included a 3% base increase to the sector. Over 250 children's mental health services are also benefiting from the funding announcement that our government has made effective this fiscal year. I look forward to the supplementary.

Mr. Fonseca: This is tremendous support for the children's mental health sector. I also understand that in our 2007 budget, we provided an additional \$4.5 million annually, starting this year, to support the implementation of a policy framework for child and youth mental health. Can you please explain how this policy framework will help to integrate services in the children's mental health sector?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: In addition to the 5% across the board which, incidentally, has been very, very well received by the sector, we have two other categories of funding: \$4.5 million is going towards furthering the aims of the policy framework on children and youth mental health in this province, which was worked on by my ministry and the sector. The objective is to improve integration of services, collaboration amongst agencies, with the child as the centre of whatever we do, and support in a more comprehensive manner for the children who are suffering from mental health challenges. I should mention that in Peel region, of the 5% increase, the Peel Children's Centre will receive \$658,548 in base increase and the Trillium Health Centre, for their outpatient program, will receive \$75,000. We have also created an unprecedented emergency fund—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question?

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question again is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning the taxpayer-financed political slush fund. I want to read you a quote—it's a bit of a lecture given here. The quote reads as follows: "It's a new day. We've given the Auditor General the authority to find out exactly what you're doing. Start behaving responsibly. Start acting in the way you know the people of Ontario expect you to act." That quote came from Premier Dalton McGuinty after it was discovered that Hydro One and the children's aid societies were spending money like crazy on SUVs and jackets and all manner of things. The Premier talked a tough game, but at the end of the day what is going to reassure a single taxpayer out there is whether people are actually doing anything to act on his words.

Today I sent a letter to the Auditor General asking him for his opinion on whether an undocumented, off-book grant program met the kind of accounting and accountability standards that the taxpayers should have the right to expect. My question is, will you agree to have these matters referred to the Auditor General? Will you take a copy of this letter—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question's been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): It's passing strange that the leader of the Conservative Party would lecture us about that office, when we increased the scope and power of the Auditor General to look at Ontario Power Generation, to look at Hydro One, which they blocked, and school boards and hospitals. We did that. That's an independent office, and that office has within its authority the right to look at any ministry.

1520

Mr. Tory: What we're talking about here is something you did three weeks ago. You did it personally. You said in the House a number of times that you had hundreds of groups approach you. Some of them you even phoned, you said, and asked if they wanted money. There is no application form. There is no paperwork. There is no due diligence. You haven't checked at all to see whether they're spending the money on the things you've talked about here in the House.

All we're asking is, will you join us in asking the Auditor General to look into this and see if any of these payments made out of the minister's slush fund demonstrate any kind of pattern of political favouritism? If the answer is no, then he'll come back and clear the air here and say there is no problem. What are you afraid of? Why won't you agree to join us in referring this matter to the Auditor General for his complete and expeditious review? Then we can have an objective accounting of

what went on here and whether there was anything wrong.

Hon. Mr. Colle: We take these investments that we've made in large and small community groups across the province as being very serious investments of the public purse. That is why we are very proud of the fact that when we look at these needy communities, we ensure that we meet the needs based on their ability to deliver those services the best they can. We look at their ability to meet the different principles we put forward, and the office of the auditor has within his or her mandate that independent authority to do what they want.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I think I'm going to make everyone's day. My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Last May, members of the public were recruited to draft the terms of reference for the environmental assessment for the private Blue22 air-rail link from Union Station to Pearson airport. They were led to believe that their input mattered. Now we have discovered that the terms of reference were already drafted four months before the public meetings began.

Minister, it sure does look like the fix is in. Why did your ministry review and comment on the terms of reference produced by the air-rail link's proponents before the public process had even started?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to speak about Blue22 and the terms of reference that are being drafted by parties other than the government. Certainly, this is a project which GO Transit and other partners are looking to move forward. The role of the Ministry of the Environment, as I've said to my friend before, is to review the terms of reference that proponents provide to us, to examine those terms of reference. I have assured him in the past and I'll continue to do that today that a decision on the terms of reference will only be made once the concerns that I have with respect to the feasibility of this, the protection of the environment, that the community has been heard—all of those issues will be examined, and terms of reference will only be approved at that point in time.

I'm not sure why my friend raises the ire with respect to wrongdoing, but the Ministry of the Environment is examining the terms of reference, as we should, and we will examine them thoroughly, as we do in every case.

Mr. Ferreira: Minister, the reality is that the terms of reference were commented on by your ministry four months before the public committee had a chance to even look at them. They were told they were going to be given meaningful input. The unfortunate victims of this entire charade are GO Transit riders along the Georgetown corridor, who are being made to wait for expanded service because it's tied in with Blue22.

Minister, I'm going to give you a way out of this mess: Unbundle the GO Transit expansion plans from the ill-conceived Blue22 scheme and use the funds ear-

marked for it as a down payment for the city of Toronto's ambitious light rail network, which goes out to the airport. When will you take the action necessary so that the much-needed GO Transit expansion can go forward sooner rather than later?

Hon. Ms. Broten: The reality that we deal with in the Ministry of the Environment is that we work closely with proponents. We give them guidance. Proponents of this project, separate from the government, may have come forward, but the process is important and the community will be engaged. I will not make a decision with respect to the terms of reference until I am satisfied that all issues have been examined fully.

But it does seem somewhat strange to hear this issue promoted by someone who's a member of a party whose government is somehow now opposed to mass investments in public transit. We are the government that has made historic investments to public transit, and it is critical that we continue to do that. But in this case, with respect to these terms of reference, all issues will be examined.

I say to the community: I've stood on your Weston platform. I've spoken to you at the side of Laura Albanese. I understand the issues that are of concern to you and I will take them into account.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education and concerns our government's healthy schools challenge. I think all members know that there's a growing concern among teachers, principals, parents and students themselves about the health of Ontario's young people.

As members are aware, on December 4, 2006, the government released a comprehensive healthy schools framework entitled Foundations for a Healthy School. The framework, based on current research and input from education and school-based health experts, including input from the Ministry of Health Promotion, is intended to assist schools in becoming healthier places to learn. I'm wondering if the minister can tell this House about the healthy schools challenge and how it will benefit students across Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I want to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for his hard work with the schools in his riding.

On December 11 of last year, the Minister of Health Promotion and I launched the healthy schools recognition program. We issued a challenge to all Ontario schools—that's to all 5,000 publicly funded schools in the province—to become even healthier. At that time, we asked that all schools in the province accept the challenge to commit to do one more thing to make their school healthier. Our idea was that schools are doing terrific things, and we wanted to validate what they are doing and ask them to push the envelope a bit more and do one more thing.

The challenge is simple. We'll acknowledge every participating school with a certificate and a pennant recognizing the school's effort to make their school healthier. Some of the activities that schools can undertake are things like developing an anti-bullying program, founding a healthy breakfast club, planting a vegetable garden and promoting safety on the playground, and I'm happy to say that more than 1,000 schools have taken up the pledge so far.

Mr. Milloy: Members may be shocked to know that physical inactivity costs Ontario's health care system about \$1.8 billion every year. Assisting in the development of healthier lifestyle habits in our young people is a tremendous start to addressing this problem.

The previous government unfortunately didn't share the same ambitious plan as we do. The only exercise they seemed to promote was for teachers walking the picket line.

In addition to the recognition program the minister just outlined, I know we are very keen on promoting healthy schools in general. Can the minister tell us what other measures the government is taking to promote healthy schools?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: We have a comprehensive healthy schools strategy. We have released the framework for healthy schools. We have daily physical activity in elementary schools.

I want to say that this morning I was at the forum for the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association—OPHEA's daily physical activity forum. That was a forum where teachers and coordinators from across the province were coming together to talk about the activities that they are encouraging and running in their schools.

Daily physical activity is a terrifically successful program across the province. It's part of the larger healthy schools strategy that we've put in place. The last piece of this strategy is our legislation on anaphylaxis in schools.

The schools are healthier. Kids are doing better. We're on the right track in education.

PETITIONS

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

"Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

"Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private

property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation's implementation."

I've signed this, Mr. Speaker.

1530

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition signed by a number of citizens from the Peterborough-Lakefield area. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

"Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

"Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 25, an act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario."

As I agree with this, I shall affix my signature and send it with Kenny.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

"Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

"Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation's implementation."

This was signed by many people from my riding at their event on Saturday.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I have a petition signed by the good people of Nipissing.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I support this petition, and I affix my signature thereto.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on Bill 184, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

"Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people"—of Ontario—"who will be affected most by this legislation; and

"Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised"—scary—"to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation's implementation."

I'm pleased to give this to Christian and present it to the Parliament of Ontario.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly titled:

"Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I agree with this petition and affix my name thereto.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs..."

And to conclude:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'm in support of this and I'll affix my name to this petition.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition courtesy of John Bell and the Ontario Sporting Dogs Association, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

"Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

"Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation's implementation."

I affix my name in support.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This has to do with Mr. Zimmer's bill.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly

"Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I'm pleased to sign this and give it to Dillon to present to you.

1540

CHILD CUSTODY

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact

with each parent and their grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;...

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Zane to give to the table.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

"Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

"Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation's implementation."

I support this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER ROADS FOR A SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 VISANT À CRÉER DES ROUTES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS SÛR

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 19, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased to join second reading debate on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act. This proposed Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007, would, if it was passed, be tougher on drinking and driving, street racing and protecting our police officers in the line of duty.

There are three components to the bill. The first one, which I believe to be one of the most important, is the drinking and driving component. This bill would introduce new measures to seize and forfeit the vehicles of

repeat drunk drivers; in other words, you can't drive if you are drunk and you won't have a car if the police catch you. This provides an incentive for drivers to separate their drinking behaviour from their driving.

We're going to clamp down on repeat drinking drivers by increasing the current 12-hour licence suspension for drivers who repeatedly blow in the "warn" range and creating longer suspensions for repeat offenders in this range.

We're going to have escalating sanctions for .05 and .08 blood alcohol levels. We're going to increase current 12-hour suspensions for drivers who repeatedly blow in that "warn" range to: for the first instance, a three-day suspension; for the second instance, seven days plus a requirement to take a remedial measures program; for the third instance, 30 days plus a requirement to take a remedial measures program and have an ignition interlock installed for six months.

Drivers with blood alcohol levels that are below the legal limit are still a danger on Ontario roads. In 2004, 20% of drinking drivers killed in Ontario had blood alcohol levels of less than .08%. Also, drivers with a blood alcohol level of .05 to .08 are eight times more likely to be involved in a collision than drivers who have not been drinking. That's according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Currently, Ontario has the shortest—12 hours—suspension of any province with short-term suspensions and no escalating sanctions for repeat offenders. This legislation would reduce licence suspensions with ignition interlock and reduce licence suspension for Criminal Code offenders on the condition that they install an ignition interlock device in their vehicle. So, for a first suspension—currently one year—they may be reduced to three months if an ignition interlock device is installed. For a second suspension—currently three years—it may be reducible to six months if an ignition interlock device is installed. For a third suspension—currently lifetime and reducible to 10 years—it would be reducible to one year if an ignition interlock device is installed. Fourth and subsequent offences—currently suspended for life—may be reducible to one year if the device is installed.

A vehicle forfeiture would be available to police, and it would amend the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act to make it easier to seize vehicles, including snowmobiles, of those who are found to be drunk.

The second component of this bill is the street racing component. Our legislation is one of the toughest in North America—tougher than what the member from Oak Ridges has proposed. It would have a seven-day vehicle impoundment and a seven-day licence suspension versus a 48-hour suspension. It would increase the minimum fine to \$2,000 and the maximum fine of to \$10,000. A court-ordered suspension: The courts could impose a driver's licence suspension for up to 10 years for a second conviction.

This legislation would allow police to take immediate action at the roadside against street racers and stunt

drivers with an immediate seven-day vehicle impoundment and a seven-day driver's licence suspension. The maximum fine upon conviction would be increased from \$1,000 to \$10,000 for those convicted—this would be the highest fine in Canada—and a 10-year licence suspension if a second or subsequent conviction for street racing is received.

The third component of this bill is blue flashing lights. To better protect police officers, we propose that police officers be permitted to use blue flashing lights on their vehicles in combination with red.

1550

Ontario is the only jurisdiction in North America that does not allow its police vehicles to use blue flashing lights, a colour that enhances police vehicles, particularly at night. We are proposing that volunteer medical responders may be allowed to use flashing green lights on their vehicles, subject to further regulation.

These blue and red flashing lights on their vehicles, which will improve visibility, was something that the Peel Regional Police spearheaded. I remember—a year ago last May—that Acting Deputy Chief Tetzlaff and I spoke of this issue and we talked about the documented safety benefits. So I'm pleased that we were able to respond in such a timely fashion.

Section 62 restricts the use of different coloured lights to various classes of vehicles. Currently, red flashing lights are permitted to a number of classes of vehicles, including police department vehicles and ambulances, and green flashing lights are permitted to firefighters only. This section is amended as follows: "to allow that further classes of vehicles, to be prescribed by regulations, may use red flashing lights; to give police department vehicles the exclusive right to use red and blue flashing lights; and to allow volunteer medical responders, to be prescribed by regulations, to use green flashing lights."

The community of Brampton and Peel Regional Police are committed to safer roads for a safer Ontario. In fact, in May 2006, community partners from across Brampton launched "Road Safety Starts with You," which was a public education partnership to help drivers and pedestrians understand the role they play in road safety. The group of 26 is led by Brampton Safe City and includes the city of Brampton, the region of Peel and the province of Ontario. The partnership recognizes that each group is performing important work in our community and has a role to play in road safety in Brampton and looks for opportunities to share the message of road safety behaviour.

I'd like to spend a few minutes telling you who those groups are. Our partners include the city of Brampton; the region of Peel; Brampton Transit; Peel Regional Police; Peel Regional Paramedic Services; Peel District School Board; Mothers Against Drunk Driving; Young Drivers of Canada; the Canadian National Railway; Ontario Provincial Police; Brampton Safe City; Brampton Fire and Emergency Services; Peel Children's Safety Village; St. John Ambulance; Peel Car Seat Safety

Committee; Rogers Television; Transportation, Health and Safety Association of Ontario; the Ontario Safety League; and, of course, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

To help spread the message, community leaders, including Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell, Peel Regional Police Chief Mike Metcalf, Brampton Fire Chief Terry Irwin and Brampton Battalion, are spokespeople on this issue.

The public education partnership will benefit people of all ages. It builds on existing programs such as the Peel Regional Police safe driver campaign, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving anti-drinking-and-driving campaign, the Peel Children's Safety Village, the Brampton Safe City community safety team, the Peel health's Wear the Gear initiative, Rogers Cable's annual Pumpkin Patrol and many others.

I'm happy to speak on this legislation. I think it's long overdue. I'm pleased that we are proposing this legislation for a safer Ontario and I believe that it would have an effect on residents across Ontario because they will know that we are serious about being tougher on drinking and driving, street racing and protecting our police officers in the line of duty.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'll be able to speak on behalf of our party, the PC caucus, in a few moments. I just wanted to say that I personally support this piece of legislation. I look forward to making comments and I look forward to putting a lot of things on the record, areas where I think we can do somewhat better.

I guess one of the things I'm concerned about is why members aren't using up all their time in this House. When we speak to this legislation, we get 20 minutes to put a lot of good, positive things on the record. On the other hand, I'll have my time and I'll try to use it up just as well.

I can tell you that too often in our province, if you look at CityPulse News or any of the TV newscasts and you look along the bottom of the screen, you see people who have died because of road safety. I'll tell you, it's actually very discouraging, especially when you see the number of young lives that are lost. I'm hoping that, although no bill will resolve everything or save every life, at least this House, and I hope every member of this House, would try to support this legislation as we move forward and try to make our streets and roads safer. Although, I think, if I'm not mistaken, at least when we were in power—I know when Minister Sterling was the minister, we had the safest roads in North America. If this is an improvement, our roads will continue to be safer.

I look forward to speaking in a few minutes and talking about some of the issues that are on the table here.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I want to commend the member for Brampton Centre—did I get that right?—for her comments.

I grew up in Brampton. Maybe she recalls this. It was about 12 years or so ago on Ray Lawson Boulevard in

the city of Brampton, where there was a horrific accident as a result of street racing. It involved, at the time, a couple of young men who happened to have been classmates of mine at J.A. Turner Secondary School, and there were two fatalities. It shocked the community.

This leads to my comment on the bill. First of all, I think all members in this House would agree with me that this is a laudable, commendable piece of legislation that perhaps we should have brought forth many years ago. But it's missing a very important element, and that's education, especially within our school system and especially amongst young people. If you take a look at the stats of those involved in reckless driving and driving while under the influence, the numbers bear out that more often than not it involves young people. To go along with this legislation, there needs to be companion legislation to call for greater investment in those education measures, in those education programs, that will instil in young people the awareness that this is something they should be responsible for and about.

I'd like to get her comments briefly on what she thinks of the need to increase education measures when it comes to reckless driving and drunk driving, as well.

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 203, an act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the remedies within it.

I want to commend the Minister of Transportation, Mrs. Cansfield, for dealing with some issues that are paramount in the public's mind, and one of those, most certainly, over the years that continues to be a concern for people is drinking and driving. This bill, if passed, would introduce some new measures to seize and forfeit the vehicles of repeat drunk drivers.

I know that constituents of mine—just in conversations with others throughout Ontario at various venues that I might be at, the conversation of repeat drunk drivers is one that comes up often. Trying to address this problem through this legislation is indeed commendable and is something we all would support. Clamping down on repeat offenders by increasing the current 12-hour licence suspension for drivers who repeatedly blow in the warning range and creating longer suspensions for repeat offenders in this range is also welcome.

I was asked this weekend, actually, about street racing, and I don't think all Ontarians understand that perhaps there are two different kinds of street racing. One is done with what one might call your stock vehicle, the one you bought and took off the lot on purchase day. That can occur, and of course it's not tolerated. But there are people who enhance their vehicle to go even faster, and that is where one is planning way ahead to go and race on our streets, and that can't be condoned either.

I've also talked to police officers in the past, and I find it amazing that people still say they do not see police vehicles, or other emergency vehicles, for that matter. But to help them to be seen by all the public, the minister will allow officers to use blue and red flashing lights on their vehicles. I hope the public sees the police and heeds them.

1600

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech made on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007. This bill would strengthen the rules to do with drinking and driving. The bill would create a situation where anyone caught driving with a blood alcohol concentration of .05 would face tougher penalties. I think in Ontario we're moving, as we should be, towards less and less tolerance towards drinking and driving. Last year, the member from Willowdale had a private member's bill to do with drinking and boating and linking drinking incidents on the water to your driver's licence. I supported that bill. The bill got all-party support and passed, and it's having an effect in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, where there have been charges laid.

A good part of this government bill we're debating today came from a private member's bill from the member from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, who was a former Minister of Transportation. The street racing part of this bill originated from his private member's bill.

We, the PC Party, support this bill. It's going to make our streets safer. I believe that Mr. Klees would like to see the bill passed, but also I know he has some amendments that he feels would strengthen the legislation as well. So he would like to see it get through second reading, go to committee and have some public input, and then at that point he'll have a chance to make some changes to the bill.

He certainly has been very active lately because he has also got a private member's bill, the organ donations bill, which had public hearings last week and is having clause-by-clause this week. So the member from Oak Ridges is working hard on a variety of issues which are being taken up by this Legislature. Hopefully, his organ donation bill will also become law in this province, because I think it makes a lot of sense as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Brampton Centre, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the members from York South-Weston, Chatham-Kent Essex and Parry Sound-Muskoka for speaking on this bill and offering us some thoughtful suggestions with regards to the legislation. I think we're all in agreement that this legislation is long overdue. It's a shame that we have to bring in this legislation, that good sense doesn't prevail on the street, but we all know that when alcohol gets mixed with fast cars and when people are drinking and driving, they don't necessarily use good judgment.

I think the fact that we've been able to add some components with regards to what our police officers need is a benefit. We fully intend to have an education program that will assist residents of Ontario to determine what behaviours they need to follow in order to make our roads safer.

I think every community has a program. I spoke a little bit about what Brampton does. I think every community looks for a safer roads program because the safety of its residents is paramount. We need to work with our

ambulances, with our paramedics and with our police officers to provide them with a safer environment. They're the individuals who work in the middle of the night in very unsafe work conditions, when visibility is impaired, and if we have impaired people on the road, we're putting them at greater risk.

Certainly, I think this is a piece of legislation that gets tough on people who drink and drive and people who race on our streets. We fully intend to listen to the suggestions offered by all the stakeholders to try to provide a piece of legislation that more accurately reflects what we've been speaking about today in the House and that provides a safer work environment for our emergency responders as well as for all the residents in Ontario and their families.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Dunlop: I am very happy to be able to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on Bill 203. I've got to be quite honest with you: I haven't had a lot of chance to review this bill yet. I didn't realize it was coming up this afternoon. But over the last few hours, I did have a good chance to review it. I do know that there was some sort of rush to this bill in the end because I think there was a lot of pressure on the minister's office from the support that Mr. Klees's private member's bill was getting. I'm glad they took the time and have come forward with this bill, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

First of all, I do want to say, on behalf of myself and friends and the constituents I represent for Simcoe North, I want to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. As I said in one of my earlier comments, when I discussed Ontario having more safe roads than any other jurisdiction in North America, I meant that sincerely. We should be very proud of our record here. Anything that we do in Ontario actually sets the bar a little higher for other jurisdictions across North America. That's only proper, and I'm glad to be able to speak to this.

But I want to thank also my colleague Frank Klees, and the federal government, which brought a street racing bill as well. I'm not sure of the exact status of that bill as we speak. From Mr. Klees's perspective—I can recall when he was the Minister of Transportation. I thought he did an excellent job as well. He put in a 10-year plan for road construction in the province of Ontario. He was certainly familiar with the complete file in a number of ways. Some of his plans, things such as the HOV lanes, that have proceeded today were the ideas of Mr. Klees. I thank him for that. When some people were killed in York region as a result of street racing, he was quick to jump on that and work to help his constituents and help all Ontarians by drafting that private member's bill, which has been brought forward, most of it, in this particular piece of legislation.

I would expect that there would be fairly strong support for any bill that would protect and make our roads

safer. I think that's the number one thing here. I wouldn't expect any of the opposition parties to really oppose it.

However, I do think there are probably areas—I understand that there are amendments that may be made to this bill, and I hope that the government will listen very carefully to those amendments. I know that my colleague Mr. Klees has some amendments he'd like to make when we get to committee. I would hope that the government would listen to him and make those as well.

Road safety: It doesn't matter where you are in the province, whether it's on a downtown Toronto street or on a concession road in rural Ontario; the impact of speeding and driving with more control of your vehicle is just so important to our communities and so important to our young people.

In the last election campaign, my campaign manager was Dr. Tom Garry. He's a family physician from Brechin and he was the mayor of the township of Ramara. Right during the election campaign, four young people were travelling, I believe, at a fairly high speed, and they hit a train. They were all from Wasaga Beach. I don't know why they were out in this remote area of Ramara township, but they were all killed instantly. It was just a tragedy, not only for the four families but for all of the members of that community, when four young men from their community all passed away instantaneously as a result of a tragic accident with a train. I can recall that my campaign manager basically had to leave the campaign for a few days because he had to be part of the investigation as the mayor and as a family physician and had to attend the funerals, etc. I know how devastated he was during that campaign that he had to be called into that.

I'll never forget—I talk about a young man in our community, very close to my kids' age, a few years back. His name was Harold Black. Harold was a bright young guy, and somehow, going home on a concession road late on, I believe it was, a Saturday evening, he lost control of his car. I don't know whether he was travelling at a high speed. I'm quite sure that he wasn't under any kind of influence of alcohol or anything like that, because he was very responsible. But I can tell you, when his car, very similar to the one my son was driving at the time—for a while, a lot of people didn't know whose car it actually was because the car had been damaged so badly. There was some relief to our family when we found out it wasn't my son's car, but I can tell you, it was devastating, because these kids were all members of the 4-H Clubs together. It had an impact on all of the rural community. I'll never forget seeing his parents' faces at the funeral parlour. It just seemed to be so unnecessary. So, road safety, young people—it has been absolutely incredible how we need to zero in on that.

1610

Talking about road safety, someone mentioned earlier, I believe in one of the comments to Mrs. Jeffrey's statement, about education. I can tell you that there are some things happening out there. I really want to zero in on the Ontario Provincial Police. Just before I came down this

morning, I was at what they call a DARE graduation. This DARE graduation was at the Uptergrove elementary school just east of Ramara township on Highway 12. The DARE program is a program that educates young people against the uses of any kind of drugs, including alcohol. I was there with the principal, a gentleman by the name of Mr. Hoover, with Constable Gerry Dwyer and the new mayor of Ramara township, Bill Duffy.

We were at this graduation of, I believe, 28 grade 6 Uptergrove students. They had taken a 10-week course provided by the Ontario Provincial Police, educating the young people. Gerry Dwyer is a community safety officer with the Ontario Provincial Police out of Orillia. He's just an incredible police officer, because he takes these kids under his wing as though they're all his own. He tries to educate them so that they're not being part of the Internet scene. He just told them this morning, for example, to turn off the computer if you see any of these bad programs on the Internet or anything that would refer to Internet luring. But today we talked about the DARE program.

He runs a number of these programs throughout all the schools in our community. Of course, part of that would be road safety and not drinking and driving. I think that message was sent a number of times this morning at that graduation. I know there were three young students—I can't recall their names—who were all winners of an essay project. Each one of them referred to drinking and driving in their comments because they are grade 6 students, and in four or five years they'll be looking forward to getting a driver's licence, etc., and driving cars, and they want to be responsible adults, not doing drugs, not drinking and driving and that sort of thing.

That takes me a little bit to the Ontario Provincial Police. I'm very pleased with the appointment of Commissioner Julian Fantino as the Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, the headquarters being in my community in the city of Orillia. I attend a lot of Ontario Provincial Police functions and quite often see Chief Fantino at some of these events.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): How's he doing with that investigation into his e-mails?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm getting some heckling down the way here. I actually didn't ask him about that.

Anyhow, one of the programs—at first, I questioned. It revolves around the black-and-white cruisers. My first reaction to having all the cruisers go back to the black-and-whites was, "Why did they ever go to white at the beginning?" They seemed to be effective cars, and if we're adding blue lights on with the reds and oranges, etc., that are already on the cars, I know these are all added expenses. But study after study has probably indicated that it's more safe to have those blue lights on a vehicle and have them black and white—a little more visible.

I know that a lot of the officers I've talked to are very pleased with the black-and-white cruisers. My understanding is that it's costing about \$500 more per cruiser to paint them. However, if it's going to save lives—

Mr. Kormos: How?

Mr. Dunlop: Someone is yelling, asking me, "How?" My understanding is that the presence of vehicles, the fact that you can identify them so easily and the fact that the commissioner has planned on using a constant road safety program instead of just the—that's on the 400 series of highways. I know that is the first place now where you will see the black-and-whites. I saw a couple coming down the 400 this morning. But if it will save lives, if it will make the job safer for police officers, then I would support that. I can tell you that, in my opinion, the Ontario Provincial Police officers I talked to like the black-and-whites. They're pleased that the commissioner brought the program forward and wish him well with it.

Apparently we're no longer going to be doing the weekend blitzes like the May 24 weekend and July 1 weekend. Apparently there's going to be more of a police presence all the time. However, that will require additional funding. That will require additional resources to have those officers on the road. I know, from my discussions with the Ontario Provincial Police Association and my contacts with the OPP, that they know they need more officers—not officers to go under contract policing, but officers to work under the patrol programs on the 400 series of highways etc. I'm under the impression that they may need 200 to 300 just in that alone across the 400 series of highways in the province. Of course, as you know, it has cost a tremendous amount of money to keep a number of our police officers—I believe it is 124—right in Caledonia for the last year. So that's been a burden on the budget. And I'm not so sure where Mr. Fantino or the commissioner will find the resources to add more police presence on the highways if we're going to do this 24 hours a day, seven days a week, like we originally did with the weekend blitzes.

The other area I'd like to comment on is the section in the bill on the ignition interlock. A lot of these pieces of legislation evolve around a private member's bill. We talked about Mr. Klees's road safety bill, Mr. Zimmer's bill on boat safety—drinking while driving a boat—Mr. Hoy's bill on protection for kids on school buses; improvements have been made there. And of course I go back to the time that I introduced the ignition interlock bill. Again we go back to road safety and the control on a road. The reason the ignition interlock bill got to this floor in the beginning—I'd like to tell you the story. There is a gentleman in my area named Doug Abernathy. He still runs a program called Orillia Against Drunk Driving. In 1981, Doug was in a terrible accident with his brother. His brother, whose name I believe was Tim, was killed in an accident up on Highway 11. It caused Doug a lot of sickness as well. Even to this day, I think Doug still has times when he has problems with his health. But I can tell you, he never gave up on ignition interlock. He kept coming to me in my office. First of all I thought, "What is this? How would we ever get this through the Legislature?" And he came in with the people from Guardian Interlock, who gave us demonstrations and showed us how it worked etc. I can tell you that he main-

tained that. I took my first private member's bill on ignition interlock over to MTO, and the bureaucracy over there said, "It won't work. Amend it so that it's a nothing type of bill and it will kind of go away, because we don't want ignition interlock here in Ontario."

But I have to say that I thank Premier Mike Harris. Mike Harris saw the bill. He wanted the bill to have teeth, the same as this bill today has additional teeth. To this day I thank Premier Harris, and in the end it was Norm Sterling, the minister, who allowed that bill to go through. It was passed unanimously by this House. And I should say at this time that that particular piece of legislation had the support of all members of this House. But it was strongly supported by Mothers Against Drunk Driving and OSAID, and almost all of the stakeholders in the insurance industry felt we should go ahead. I can't think of anybody that didn't really want to see that legislation put in place, much the same as I think we're discussing here today with Bill 203. In the end, a nice thing happened under that ignition interlock bill: That particular year, after it was passed and implemented, Doug Abernathy from Orillia was made Citizen of the Year in the community, because in the end he saved lives.

1620

That's what we're doing here in this House today, trying to save lives, whether it's with the bill as it stands or with an amended bill. Whether it's Frank Klees's bill or the Minister of Transportation's bill, hopefully it will be good, even if we do have to make some amendments.

I know that the whole idea of lowering the blood alcohol content in some areas from .08 to .05 has been promoted very strongly by Mothers Against Drunk Driving. It's another step on the way. Eventually, I expect we may see no alcohol at all being allowed in vehicles in North America or anywhere else as far as our blood alcohol content is concerned. More and more people are more responsible all the time. The vast majority of young people today, the kids who are 16, 17, 18 years old, know the laws and they simply do not drink and drive. The odd time something will happen and, unfortunately, you'll get an accident where driving under the influence is the charge that is laid, and that's very unfortunate.

In the end, we need to know that whatever we do in this Legislature does have an impact. I like the education component that a few people have mentioned. Just visiting that classroom this morning with Constable Gerry Dwyer and seeing these grade 6 kids absorb this—they were all given little graduation pins and booklets, etc—I think it's a step in the positive manner.

We also have a group in Orillia, out of the Orillia detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police, called the adult youth volunteer group. They're not like auxiliary officers, just ladies and gentlemen from the community who want to help out at the OPP detachment. I'm so pleased that they're around at a number of events, any of the festivals or community events involving young people, or the fall fairs, etc. They get out there and they

help the OPP provide information to the general public on all these types of things. Any information coming out of this legislation today would be seen at one of their booths. I think they may be the only adult youth volunteer group in Ontario at this time, but again, it's because of people like Gerry Dwyer and the support they got from the commissioner's office in the past and the local detachment and the mayor, etc, that it's been a big success.

I'm going to wind up here in a second. There are some amendments we'd like to see to this bill. I hope you will listen to them. It's one bill that we should get to committee fairly quickly, spend some time there and get it into law as quickly as possible.

I want to thank the minister for bringing it forward as well, and I want to again thank my colleague from Oak Ridges, the former Minister of Transportation, for his hard work in really drawing attention to this issue in this provincial Legislature. It's a job well done. I applaud the work Mr. Klees and the minister have both done to bring this to the attention of the public and look forward to other comments that we may hear in this House this afternoon as we further debate Bill 203 and make our roads and highways safer in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ferreira: I'm pleased to rise for a short response to the member's comments. I want to reiterate what he mentioned about his colleague from Oak Ridges. Mr. Klees has certainly been at the fore of putting forward legislation to deal with street racing, or extreme driving as some have called it. He recently made quite a good statement where he compared the additive nitrous oxide to turning a vehicle into essentially a rocket and the devastating effects that has had across our province—in fact, in the case of two of his constituents. I want to applaud him for that initiative.

The member also referenced the need for education initiatives in our schools with the young people. I mentioned earlier that I think we need to do more. I have been present at schools in my riding where they bring in the vehicles that have been destroyed as a result of drunk driving, as a result of street racing, and it really does make a powerful impact upon those young people. There are other programs. I'm sure we've all seen the videos that are put out by organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving. But still we see a preponderance of young people being involved in these horrific accidents. The member referenced the one in Ramara township, I believe it was, where four young men died as a result of that accident.

Clearly we're spreading the message, but it's not going far enough. I would like to see increased measures. I would like to see members on both sides perhaps discuss that issue, about how we can increase the level of awareness through education measures aimed at young people.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to rise today and follow the speaker from Simcoe North and the member from York South-Weston. I think this is one

of those issues that strikes people in their everyday lives on a regular basis, and while there may be some philosophical argument about all sorts of issues, one thing that people have in the forefront of their mind all the time is road safety. Whether you're a motorist or a pedestrian, a young person or an older person, safety on the roads in both the urban and rural areas of Ontario is something that people want to see treated seriously.

You see some of the carnage on the roads these days. If you've ever been at the scene of a fatal accident, there's a hush that goes over the accident scene that makes that highway and that whole area just seem different. It's a thing you'll never forget and something I hope none of us who haven't experienced it ever do experience.

This bill starts to treat drinking and driving in a much more serious way. It starts to treat street racing in a much more serious way.

I'd like to pay homage to the young people of the upcoming generation, because I think they get the drinking and driving message much more clearly than the older generation. I know that my children's friends, my son's friends are much more serious about drinking and driving than those in my generation were. They have a designated driver before the party starts. They know who's driving them home that night. They take those sorts of precautions. The people of my generation simply didn't do that. So for those who point to this as being an issue that is only for young people, I think they would find that the contrary is actually more accurate, that it's older and middle-aged people who are still having a problem with drinking and driving.

This bill, I think, will do a lot to make sure that our roads are much safer and safe from those who still continue to choose to drink and drive.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech from the member for Simcoe North on Bill 203, which is the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007. He commented on the DARE graduation he attended in his riding, the drug abuse resistance education training that is done by the OPP. I've had the opportunity on a couple of occasions to attend the ceremony in Parry Sound, at the Parry Sound High School. The last time I attended, Christine Dawson was the constable who was running the program and, based on what I saw, it was very successful. She had enthusiastic students learning about drugs and alcohol in our society.

This legislation is being supported by the official opposition. Society is changing. Twenty or 30 years ago, drinking and driving was something that was relatively commonplace, I would say, and now we're moving towards less and less tolerance, as we should be. We may very well be moving to the stage where there is zero tolerance.

This bill follows up on the private member's bill that was introduced a few years back by the member from Simcoe North, to do with driver interlock. It strengthens that part of the bill and follows up on the private

member's bill by Frank Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, to do with street racing, and it also strengthens some of the rules to do with drinking and driving.

We support this bill. I know Mr. Klees had some amendments to do with after-market parts for street racing that he'll want to put forward on this bill when it's in committee. We support the bill and look forward to it going to committee.

1630

Mr. Kormos: It is always a delight to listen to the member from Simcoe North. His commitment to safer communities and safer streets and roads is unquestionable.

I should tell folks that I'll be speaking to this bill later this afternoon. As a matter of fact, in a couple of minutes' time, the member for York South-Weston—you notice how I refer to Mr. Ferreira by his riding, in compliance with the standing orders—will be speaking to the bill.

Now, I do note that the member from Simcoe North reminds us of Commissioner Fantino's little Martha Stewart moment, when he decided to repaint all of Ontario's OPP cruisers—or maybe he was just channelling the Designer Guys; I really don't know. I hear the member say it's going to make our highways safer but, Lord thundering, my friend, how does painting police cruisers black and white instead of white and blue make our highways safer? For the life of me—at 500 bucks a pop, it seems to me that a few more cops on the road would make our highways safer. Is Fantino so caught up in this redecorating that he's going to install grey velour on the upholstery so that it doesn't clash? I would dearly love the member to explain his enthusiasm for newly repainted police cruisers.

Look, we're talking about the same commissioner who deep-sixed Sergeant Cam Woolley, the most recognizable single voice of the OPP here in Ontario, and one who attracted our attention immediately on radio broadcasts and whom I'm convinced by his very nature made our highways safer. Explain those, member from Simcoe North.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe North, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from York South-Weston, Oakville, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Niagara Centre for their comments.

I go back to the member from Niagara Centre. I have to tell you that as critic for community safety and correctional services, I try my best to work as closely as possible with all of the stakeholders. I work very closely with the Ontario Provincial Police Association. If I go down to Caledonia to visit some of the officers or if I'm just talking to officers like I was at a retirement this past weekend on Saturday night, I quite often ask them what their thoughts are on changes that have been made. I can tell you that very few of the police officers—it's partly to do with tradition, why they like the black-and-whites, because it was a symbol, going back many decades, but the feeling with police officers—and, I believe, with

Commissioner Fantino—is that they believe the vehicles are more easily identifiable on the roads. For that reason, I know a lot of the younger officers support it too. I don't think it's unanimous support; I'm not saying that for a second. But I felt that when we're talking about road safety, if the officers—

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: I want to sum this up. If there's a savings—

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes, it costs more money, maybe up to \$500 for a car, but the reality is, if it's more identifiable and there are more officers on the road—and I agree that there should be more officers—then it should make our roads safer. They can identify people who are being caught doing 200 clicks and being drunken drivers. That's what it's really all about. I support the black-and-whites and I support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007. This is a worthy piece of legislation.

Mr. Kormos: Whoa, whoa—

Mr. Ferreira: I think the member from Niagara Centre needs to read the comments—

Mr. Kormos: We haven't finished the debate yet.

Mr. Ferreira: Well, let me go on for my 20 minutes before you jump in, all right? We have to whip the member from Niagara Centre into line. I look forward to speaking on it for the next 19 minutes or so.

There are some areas of concern that we believe need to be addressed, but this is a start. I hope we get through second reading and that we're able at the committee level to examine this bill and offer amendments that I think would make it even more worthy and begin to make a real impact on improving road safety across the province of Ontario.

I wanted to start by talking about some of those who have been most affected by what has happened on the streets and roads of Ontario, and they are the victims, the needless victims of the irresponsible actions of others. I ask members to recall a particular case in early December that shocked me. It was the case of Terri Callaway, who was a 37-year-old mother of four who lived in Richmond Hill. Ms. Callaway, as she did every night after tucking in her four kids, who are aged three to nine, went out for her jog. Just a couple of blocks from home, as she completed her evening jog, she was struck down by a drunk driver who took her life. The very sad case of Ms. Callaway I think illustrates why a bill of this nature is so important and why we must do all that we can to get drunk drivers, to get street racers, off of our streets.

There are other cases, and I want to reference a couple of those. I know that what happened in the case of Rob and Lisa Manchester, a couple from the riding of Oak Ridges, was certainly instrumental in the member for Oak Ridges coming forward with his private member's bill last year on street racing. Rob and Lisa Manchester were a couple living life to its fullest. They had been out

celebrating their 17th wedding anniversary back in May of last year. On their way home, they were killed instantly when their car was struck by one of two vehicles that were racing up Yonge Street. The young man in that case was a 19-year-old who was charged in the deaths of Rob and Lisa Manchester. It's important to remember them as we debate this legislation.

Then there was another shocking case: Tahir Khan. Mr. Khan was a Pakistani immigrant who had come to Canada to seek a better life for himself and his children and was working as a taxicab operator for Diamond Taxi. In January 2006, Mr. Khan was killed in a violent collision on Mount Pleasant here in the city of Toronto. Again, he was the victim of two young people, both 18, who had taken their souped-up luxury cars out for a drag race up Mount Pleasant. What was particularly sad about the case of Mr. Khan is that he was about to receive his Canadian citizenship and was then planning to bring over his wife and children, and he lost his life as a result of senseless actions and decisions by others. So let's remember Mr. Khan.

In an interjection to the member for Brampton Centre earlier, I raised another case. This one happened further back, in 1994. It was in the city of Brampton, where I grew up. A young mom who was about to have another child—she was an expectant mother—was killed on Ray Lawson Boulevard, again as a result of street racing by a couple of young men. There are examples of this throughout the province. Since 1999, when we talk about street racing, 38 Ontarians have lost their lives needlessly and as a result of the reckless actions of others.

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When we talk about drunk driving, the human toll is even higher. In 2004 alone—and I believe this figure has been quoted by other members, but I think it's worth repeating it to magnify the seriousness of this issue and the toll that it's taking in the streets of our communities—drinking and driving collisions across this province claimed 192 lives, and the toll continues to mount year after year after year.

In response to these and other incidents, members of this House have come forward with private members' legislation. In many ways, this particular piece of legislation, Bill 203, is an amalgam of some of those initiatives that have been brought forward by members such as the ones from Oak Ridges and Simcoe North, and I believe the member for Willowdale also put forward a private member's bill.

So we have a bill which, as I said earlier, I think all members of this House would agree is something we do need to bring forward and we do need to implement, but there are concerns. I want to read from a story that appeared in the Toronto Sun about 10 days back. It talks about the reaction to the legislation by the mother of someone who was killed by street racers. It reads as follows:

"The mother of a young man killed by a suspected street racer says new provincial anti-racing measures don't go far enough to prevent more tragedies.

"Adrienne Seggie, of Brantford, whose son Matthew Power, 21, was run over while crossing a Hamilton street last November, said measures in a road safety bill introduced by the Dalton McGuinty government yesterday are only a good beginning.

"Seggie said she believes the legislation was rushed in an election year to appeal to voters, and said the government should have taken the time to draft a more proactive bill.

"I don't feel it's enough because the police still have their hands tied," she said."

I would hope that it's not a case of electioneering, because this is a very serious issue. I would hope that's not the case. But let's look at some of the concerns that seem to indicate that perhaps this bill has come forward in a hurried manner.

On the issue of suspensions for those who are driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, we see that the bill is proposing to increase the period of suspensions. For a first offence, the period of suspension under the bill will be three days; a second offence, seven days; a third offence, 30 days. I think that's laudable, but here's my big problem with it: There is, in effect, a statute of limitations on this in that previous suspensions won't be considered if they occurred five or more years previously. So it allows these irresponsible, reckless human beings to perpetuate their behaviour. They essentially get a clean bill of health after five years. I think that's a serious flaw with this legislation, and I hope we can work in an amendment once it goes to committee hearings after the passage of second reading.

Similarly, when it comes to street racing, again we have this statute of limitations. If a conviction occurs—the first conviction—the bill is calling for increases in the minimum fines, and it's also calling for increases in licence suspensions. On a first conviction, not more than two years in length; on a subsequent conviction, not more than 10 years. But again, after 10 years, previous convictions for street racing get tossed out, so you have this possibility, this culture, that repeat offenders will have their offences taken away. Again, it perpetuates itself. When we look at that, both under the provisions on impaired driving and the provisions under street racing—that needs great study by members of this House in committee.

I want to also say that we're leaving too much to regulation. When it comes to administrative fees for licence suspension, when it comes to exemptions from payment, when it comes to establishing conduct review programs, when it comes to establishing fees to conduct a review of the program, I don't think that this bill in its present wording, in its present text, addresses—it leaves it up to regulation, and I don't think that is meaningful enough.

In reference to the term "street racing," I'm afraid what it does is glorify the activity. Let's call it what it is: reckless driving. Those organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving have referred to it as extreme driving. That's what this is. I don't think we need references that glorify or romanticize extreme racing, reckless

behaviour, that has led to so much carnage on our streets. This has something that has been pointed out by both law enforcement officers and activists who are concerned about the impact of this piece of legislation.

A further comment about street racing—and I want to go back to the very worthwhile private member's bill that was put forward by Mr. Klees, the member for Oak Ridges. I hope that his proposal is one that deserves great merit as we study this in committee. He'd like to have an outright ban on the nitrous oxide connections that turn these extreme racing vehicles into killing machines. His exact quote—which I think is a powerful one, and that I referenced earlier—is, "It takes an ordinary car and makes it into a rocket that kills."

We've seen the examples of that. Mr. Klees's proposed amendment is one that I would certainly encourage my colleagues on the NDP caucus to support, because it is well thought out, and he's someone who has taken a great initiative on this issue.

I'm down to about five minutes left, and I want to go into the aspects that I mentioned in a couple of my shorter interjections, and that's around education, and specifically the education of young people when it comes to the dangers that they put themselves into and also put innocent bystanders into when they decide to get into a vehicle while intoxicated or drunk or when they decide to use that vehicle for extreme racing.

The legislation in its present context talks about punitive measures. Certainly it's worthwhile to make penalties and sanctions more difficult. But I believe there needs to be a component in this legislation that talks about education and raising awareness. Law enforcement has called for this.

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The Minister of Transportation, whose bill this is, mentioned in the press late last year that we would be seeing a comprehensive educational campaign brought forth, aimed not just at young people but all Ontarians. We haven't that yet. It's now about six months later. We're seeing the legislation, and we're glad the legislation is being brought forward for debate and for consideration, but we'd like to see that educational component come forward as well, part and parcel of this legislation. Organizations like MADD, the Ontario Safety League and, as I say, some of our most senior law enforcement officers across this province have said how important this is.

At the end of the day, I don't know whether this legislation will actually see itself being passed through final reading in this House. As we all recognize, our time in this session may be limited. It would be unfortunate if this particular legislation doesn't make it through till the end. I would urge my colleagues on the government side, as they make decisions on priorities over the coming weeks—perhaps a few weeks, perhaps more than a few—that this be one of the bills that is given legislative priority so that we can see it through and can enact these measures to prevent the recurrence of too much carnage that we've seen on the streets and roadways of Ontario,

and that the passage of this bill by this Parliament in fact be a tribute to all those who have lost their lives and also the families of those victims, who have seen their loved ones lose their lives as a result of such reckless decisions made by others.

I look forward to the comments of my fellow members in this House and I look forward to participating in the remainder of the debate this afternoon and perhaps in the future as this bill makes it through second reading, goes to committee and hopefully comes back to this House for passage in the not-too-distant future.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I do want to say to the member from York South–Weston that I applaud your urging that we give this speedy passage. This is important legislation; it is. I think you used the term “legacy legislation.” It does make a difference that will live long beyond our term and certainly this session.

When I think of legacy legislation, I think of things like the greenbelt. That’s going to be there for years and years, for generations and generations. That’s a legacy piece of legislation. The Ontario child benefit that we’re currently debating and looking at: another piece of legacy legislation. I’m really happy to support something where we will have left an important footprint here.

One component of this legislation I’m particularly happy about is the escalating sanctions for the repeat offenders who fall within that warning range. A police officer in my riding at a Mothers Against Drunk Driving red ribbon campaign launch talked to me about their frustrations. They know that there are certain drivers who are habitual offenders.

Young people have figured this out. My kids, all in their 20s, know that if they’re going out drinking, one person is going to be a designated driver. They’ve figured it out; it’s the older people who still have some work to do on this. This will give the police a tool to keep those habitual drunk drivers off the roads: three days’ suspension on the first offence, increasing to seven on the second with a mandatory remedial measures program, and 30 days for the third instance. This is good, progressive legislation.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Bill 203. I had spoken with prosecutors regarding this bill. One of the interesting points they brought forward, which I’m sure hasn’t been discussed, was, first of all, that it’s kind of giving an explanation of how the actual process works.

I very much appreciate the time that has been added, Clerk. That’s okay. We can go on for quite a while.

What takes place is that the technology in the industry is so well-defined that they actually have onboard computers whereby they are given directions from a central booking agency that says that you will enter on this onramp at such and such a time, this car will pull up beside you, you engage at this speed and at this bridge you begin the race. The race is over however much distance—it could be five kilometres away. Those indi-

viduals then tell you who the winner is when they see it. That’s the level of technology and advancement they’re talking about.

One of the areas that hasn’t been brought up that I think needs to be discussed—and I did say to this prosecutor that I would bring it up on his behalf—is that they need to look at the attendees. The reason that it’s doing so well is that people come to watch. If there is some way to capture those individuals who are watching and paying to watch that, it would reduce the likelihood of these sorts of actions taking place. They need some form of prosecution method so that they can come forward and prosecute all those attendees who are spurring them on, paying the bucks to come in and watch that sort of thing where it’s happening and getting inside the loop on all that information.

We’ve brought forward a couple of things that I certainly hope the government will address in their discussions on that: how to address the technology and how to look at that, when they’re racing up the 400-series highways, as expressed to me, with their onboard computers and they say, “Go,” and they’re going and that’s when it ends. They’re just winding through traffic and causing all kinds of problems. Certainly they know where the police are; they’re well organized enough to look at these things.

One of the other areas that hasn’t been mentioned would be the attendees who are spurring this on and making these sorts of things happen.

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Bill 203.

Mr. Kormos: I’m going to be speaking to the bill in almost 40 minutes’ time. Let’s not get carried away here, please, for Pete’s sake. This bill does far less than the government would have us believe, and I say to you that it’s going to do precious little to end street racing in the province of Ontario. So I say, please, get a grip, folks. Legacy legislation? Far from it; not bloody likely.

This is more about spin and drama and flash and flair and appearing to respond to a very serious problem on our roadways that has taken far too many lives already. While symbolism in and of itself is fine, let’s not pretend that the bill is something that it isn’t. I’m going to have a chance to explain why I say that. As a matter of fact, there’s a consideration here that hasn’t been spoken about yet, and that is that this bill may well have the effect of reducing the consequences that convicted or potentially convicted street racers will have to face, and I’m going to speak to that in the 20 minutes that are going to be made available to me in 40 or 50 minutes’ time.

Regrettably—gosh, here we go—I may be squeezed out. Unless there is goodwill amongst members of the chamber here who shorten their time so that I can get my 20 minutes in, I’m going to find myself at 6 o’clock adjourned to yet another day. But that’s fine, because I’ll be back and I’ll tell you what it is that I want to talk about when it comes to this bill.

1700

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): Je dois dire que je suis pleinement d'accord avec ce projet de loi. La raison en est que l'on s'aperçoit que le projet de loi était déposé le 12 avril dernier, ce qui veut dire il y a 11 jours. Lorsque j'entends mes collègues de l'autre côté de la Chambre nous dire qu'on ne va pas assez loin avec le projet de loi—s'il y avait des amendements à porter, pourquoi n'avons-nous pas apporté les amendements avant aujourd'hui? Mais on aura certainement aussi la chance d'en apporter lorsque le comité permanent va se rencontrer pour discuter le projet de loi.

La partie qui m'intrigue le plus, qui me touche le plus, c'est l'article 172, qui « interdit les courses automobiles illégales. À l'heure actuelle, la peine imposée pour cette infraction est une amende d'au moins 200 \$ et d'au plus 1 000 \$. » J'ai vécu une expérience en 1997, je crois, lorsque mon neveu a été tué dans un accident où les autos couraient sur la rue principale dans la municipalité de Rockland.

Aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi, j'espère que nous allons pouvoir mettre en force, en place, des amendes qui vont vraiment arrêter cette course illégale qui se pratique toujours dans nos communautés. Lorsque je regarde aussi le programme de conduite avec facultés affaiblies, je regarde le programme d'examen de la conduite. Souvent les personnes sont portées à venir nous voir lorsqu'elles sont arrêtées pour conduite avec facultés affaiblies. Je dis toujours aux personnes : « Il n'y a aucune chance pour toi de gagner. C'était prouvé que tu étais pris en conduisant ton automobile avec des facultés affaiblies. »

J'espère que les trois partis vont appuyer ce projet de loi pour le bien de tous et chacun de cette belle province.

The Deputy Speaker: Member from York South–Weston, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ferreira: I want to thank the members for London North Centre, Oshawa, Niagara Centre et le membre de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for their comments. I want to especially thank the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for sharing with us the personal story about his family member who was himself a victim.

This piece of legislation deserves considerable debate and study and a very thorough committee process once it passes second reading in this House, which I think it will have no trouble doing. I hope that this is more than just electioneering as my esteemed colleague from Niagara Centre suggests. I hope to be here for his critique, which I know will be constructive, when he gets a chance to debate this bill, perhaps this afternoon, perhaps not.

Again I want to go back to two of the major concerns I have. One is regarding previous suspensions. I don't think any of the members touched upon this. Someone who is a habitual offender gets their record wiped clean. In the case of drunk driving, any suspensions that occurred more than five years previously will disappear from the record. I don't think this is a clause that we can allow to remain in this legislation because it promotes

continuance of this reckless and dangerous behaviour. And when it comes to extreme driving, reckless driving, previous convictions won't be considered if they occurred 10 or more years previously. These are two particular measures that deserve amendment, that must be changed for this legislation to have more teeth.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm very pleased to speak in support of this bill, but I'll just pause for a second because my NDP colleague is moving away from this side of the House. He doesn't want to be seen on camera beside a Liberal who's supporting this bill. We'll give you a chance to return to the other side of the House.

On a serious note, this bill, if implemented and passed—and I'm glad to see that my friend across the way in the NDP caucus is confident that it's going to—is about saving lives. There are so many lives in Ontario that are needlessly lost because of driving offences and drinking and driving offences that we really have to do something about this.

My experience last year with my boating bill, which brought in car-driving licence suspensions for impaired boating operators, was another example of things that this government has done to eliminate this problem of impaired operators of vehicles. When I was working through that piece of legislation, what I came to realize after speaking with all the stakeholders was the importance, the high value, that a possessor of an Ontario driver's licence places on that licence.

There are people in Ontario who will drink some beer, drink some alcohol, get in a car and drive and not give it a thought except if they think there's a chance they're going to lose their Ontario car driver's licence. That is a huge motivating factor in people's lives, especially when you take a big jurisdiction like the GTA. People need their car to get from one end of the city to the other. They need their car to get to work. They often need their car as part of their employment. An Ontario driver's licence is an asset. If you have the driver's licence in your pocket, that is an asset that facilitates your life and often facilitates your employment.

What this bill does is, it threatens that person's asset. We say, "If you're going to race cars and if you're going to race cars negligently, if you're going to drink and drive a car, we're going to put that asset that we know you value under threat."

The other thing that people really value, and particularly—and I don't mean to pick on the youth, but with street racing, the fact of the matter is, it's largely younger drivers who are involved in that activity, and they've got a second asset: A young person who has his driver's licence—that's an asset—has his car. These street racing cars are typically souped-up, hopped-up cars. They've got a significant financial investment in the car. That's another asset that the person has. What this bill does is put those assets—the driver's licence and the car itself—under threat because, if you're stopped when driving and you've got alcohol on your breath, we increase the threat to that driver's licence. We say, "If

you've been stopped and you've got a reading of 0.05, you're going to lose your licence automatically for three days. If you're at the next step up, you're going to lose it for seven days. If you're at the next step up, you're going to lose it for 30 days." That's not even when you're blowing over; that's just when you're in the danger zone, between .05 and .08. So now there's the threat. The threat always was, "If you're over .08, you're going to lose that driver's licence"—what I call an asset. We've increased the risk to that asset. You're going to lose your licence for a period of time even if you're not impaired but you're close: You're somewhere between .05 and .08.

We've also, on the vehicle suspension provisions of the bill, really threatened that person's asset. We've threatened the car itself. And the bill says—if passed—that if you're caught street racing, you're going to get an immediate seven-day suspension of your driver's licence, you're going to get an immediate seven-day impoundment of the vehicle, and then various other penalties kick in from there.

So putting those assets of a driver—his or her licence, the actual ownership or possession of the car—under threat, in my view—and I don't mean to make a pun here—is a very sobering thought for that driver, for that possessor of the driver's licence.

1710

Similarly with the ignition interlock provisions: What the interlock provision says is that if you've lost your licence and you can't drive—a lot of those people are driving outside the system. They're driving notwithstanding the suspension, so it doesn't have any real bite for them. So there's a bit of an incentive here: "Look, we know you really want to drive. You're under suspension. The existing interlock provisions don't apply, but if you will voluntarily submit to the ignition interlock and put that in your car on a limited basis, you can get your driver's licence back." Again, we put value on that driver's licence. That driver's licence has been suspended and we've shown that person, "Here's a way to get that asset back, with some limitations. If you will submit to an ignition interlock system in your car, you can drive that car for certain limited purposes."

So this bill provides for threats to the driver's licence and threats to the possession of the vehicle. There's also the incentive, then, to provide a means, for a person who I suppose really needs their driver's licence but is under a long-term suspension, to bring themselves back into a way of operating a car legally if they'll undergo the voluntary ignition lock system.

This is a bill that has been crafted with some creativity. It addresses motives for why people might want to protect their driver's licence, might want to protect themselves from the threat of vehicle seizure, and provides an incentive, for people who want to drive, to reintegrate into a legal driving regime.

This is a piece of legislation that I urge my colleagues to support. I'm happy to see that the member from York South-Weston is obviously supporting the legislation. He

feels confident that it's going to pass, and I urge my colleagues to support it, as I will.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): I'm pleased to add a few comments to those remarks made by the member from Willowdale with respect to Bill 203, which amends several acts, including the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001, which is renamed, as part of this bill, the Civil Remedies Act.

I'd say that this is a bill which all parties in the Legislature should be supporting, and we certainly will, to deal with street racing, as well as to provide stiffer penalties for impaired driving. This bill, in large part, grew out of the private member's bill that was brought forward in June 2006 by my colleague the member from Oak Ridges, who was sufficiently concerned about this that he brought the private member's bill forward following the tragic deaths of Rob and Lisa Manchester.

We're pleased that the government is bringing forward Bill 203 and we look forward to working with them to get this bill passed as soon as possible. But again, this is a situation where we need to take the time to listen to the concerns that have been heard with respect to this legislation, to make sure that it does end needless deaths on our roadways, specifically some of the comments that my colleague the member from Oak Ridges has brought forward with respect to the nitrous oxide power-boosting systems that have been added to some of these street racing vehicles, that being part of, I guess, the thrill that's associated with street racing, and making sure that we don't have those systems to be equipped on vehicles that are going to be operating on our streets—of course, not interfering with recreational systems. But I think that's an important consideration that I would urge the government to take a look at in proposing amendments which we will be bringing forward in due course to make this bill as strong as it should be.

Mr. Kormos: I listened carefully to the comments of the member from Willowdale. He made it very clear that this government covets Ontario's assets. He couldn't have said it in a simpler, more straightforward way, so I suppose if Mr. Zimmer, the member from Willowdale, is telling anybody anything, it's to cover your assets and, at the very least, don't get caught drinking and driving; preferably, don't drink and drive. I'm going to have a chance to speak to the bill in a few minutes' time.

Let's understand that the bill is more than just about the amendments to section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act, the road-racing provisions. It's also about some significant amendments to the provisions that permit the seizure of goods obtained by the proceeds of crime. This is one of my concerns, that that's going to get short shrift in the process because of the focus on street racing. That's why New Democrats believe this bill should go to committee. We're eager to start in committee as soon as the bill receives second reading and to work very hard at the committee level.

I'm interested in hearing what folks have to say. I'm interested in what MADD—Mothers Against Drunk Driving—has to say when, on the one hand, government members support a Liberal backbencher's bill to put beer and wine in corner stores, making beer and wine available as easily and readily as a walk down the block, yet on the other hand the government says it wants to get tougher on drinking and driving, drunk driving, and the incredible dangers that poses. Well, I see one as a very significant contradiction of the other. Here we are, we've got Liberals who want to make liquor, booze, spirits more readily accessible, more easily accessible, more instantly accessible, accessible to people who've already probably been drinking, yet they say they're concerned about the safety on the highway. I'm not suggesting that there isn't a single member here who doesn't have a commitment to creating safer highways, but I'm saying there are some real contradictions within the Liberal caucus.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Obviously, both as an MPP and as Minister of Health Promotion with responsibility for injury prevention strategy for the government of Ontario, I'm very pleased to support this bill. I want to commend my colleague the Minister of Transportation for her quick response to a number of issues, and also the parliamentary assistant, Mr. McNeely, who's been very helpful on this file.

Let me just talk quickly about a couple of the aspects. I was out canvassing in my riding in Ottawa West—Nepean, on the Nepean side and on the Ottawa side, on the weekend—a beautiful weekend, people in a good mood, raking their lawns, talking about how the Senators are going to win the Stanley Cup. They also were very pleased with this particular piece of legislation that's been proposed, particularly when it comes to street racing.

We have some challenges in pockets and neighbourhoods of Ottawa where people are abusing the law. They're putting their lives and other people's lives at risk through street racing. The thing that I am very pleased with in this particular piece of legislation is that it allows police to take immediate action roadside, against street racers and stunt drivers, with an immediate seven-day vehicle impoundment and a seven-day licence suspension. What that does, obviously, is take that vehicle away from the individual so he or she can do no further harm to themselves or to the community.

Street racing is also annoying from a noise point of view. It's just this grinding sound that is keeping people up at night. It's disrespectful to the neighbourhood, the environment and the public safety of the people in the neighbourhood. So I know the people of Ottawa West—Nepean are very supportive of this, and I look forward to seeing this particular piece of legislation pass quickly with full opposition support.

I'm also pleased, as someone who was nearly killed about 20 years ago by a drunk driver, to see tougher sentences coming into effect and tougher provisions for those individuals who put the community's safety at risk

as a result of drinking and driving. It's not acceptable, and I look forward to quick passage.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark—Carleton): It is a bit ironic that the Minister of Health Promotion, before he became the Minister of Health Promotion, said in the Ottawa newspapers that he was in favour of selling beer and alcohol in corner stores. It was pointed out earlier in the responses that there is a dichotomy here, or an irony or a duplicity, with regard to their real concern about this particular issue.

I want to say that I'm very proud that when I was the Minister of Transportation I was able to bring on the bill with regard to ignition interlock for this province. I took the lead from my colleague Garfield Dunlop, the member for Simcoe North, who had brought forward a private member's bill. Our government took some of the initiatives by private members and brought them forward as government legislation. But I want to tell you, when I did that, I gave the member for Simcoe North all of the credit for bringing that initiative to the floor. I believe that there are several private members' initiatives in this bill, and I don't think that they have received due credit from the government with regard to their initiative and bringing them to the floor. I think that it would have been more appropriate had those pieces of legislation been stand-alone pieces of legislation so that those several members from the Legislature could point to them and say to their constituents, "I was here not only as an opposition member, but I was also here as a constructive member of the opposition as a backbench MPP."

1720

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elliott: I'm pleased to be able to join the debate on Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Zimmer would be the only one who could give the response, and he's not here.

Further debate? The member for Whitby—Ajax.

Mrs. Elliott: Let me say at the outset that we support Bill 203, subject to a few amendments that we're going to be proposing subject to hearing issues in committee and hearing from other people who have a stake in these matters. But as I mentioned briefly a few moments ago, it was our party that first brought this issue forward almost a year ago, on June 7, 2006, when my colleague the member for Oak Ridges brought forward the private member's bill known as the Street Racing Act, 2006, which contained a lot of the same provisions that are contained in Bill 203. In fact, the Premier congratulated the member for Oak Ridges when the announcement was made with respect to Bill 203 on April 12. He said, "I want to thank Frank, and I want to acknowledge the leadership role he has assumed. He has taken a keen and active interest in this, he has put forward some very positive proposals.... I want you to know, Frank, that you have had an influence for good on the policy that we are announcing today, and I thank you for that."

We do appreciate the Premier giving some credit where I believe credit was due, but I think that all members of this Legislature can certainly agree that something needs to be done to address especially the issues involved with street racing to prevent the needless deaths that happen every year as a result of it. According to government statistics, there have been some 35 deaths attributed to street racing since 1999, all of which have left behind many grieving friends and family members and, in the case of the tragic deaths of Rob and Lisa Manchester, have left behind an orphaned seven-year-old child.

We all understand the importance of dealing with these issues, and we all know that we need to work together to pass this legislation quickly but not in haste, of course. We need to have a full and complete consultation process with all of the stakeholders involved and all of the members of the public who want to make representations with respect to this bill, so that we have a well-thought-out, comprehensive consideration of the contents of Bill 203. I trust that the government will allow the sufficient time that will be needed for committee hearings and for debate on this whole process, because there are a number of important areas that are dealt with as part of this bill. It's really divided into several distinct areas, the first one of which deals with the issue of impaired driving. Of course, that has been dealt with numerous times over the past number of years, but Bill 203 certainly increases the suspension periods and conviction times for persons who are caught and convicted for impaired driving offences.

Section 48 currently provides for a 12-hour administrative driver's licence suspension for drivers whose blood alcohol concentration exceeds .05%. Bill 203 will increase the initial licence-period suspension to three days for a first suspension, seven days for a second suspension and 30 days for a subsequent suspension. This has been strongly supported by a number of groups. I imagine what we will be hearing in committee is the comments from a number of groups as to whether that is going to be a sufficient penalty.

The penalties will also be increased. The current penalty is a one-year driver's licence suspension for a first offence. Bill 203 will provide for a three-year suspension for a second offence and indefinitely for a subsequent offence. It's hard to believe that it should be even necessary to provide for subsequent offences with respect to impaired driving, but I guess there are some people who just don't get it, and they need to get that message, loud and clear.

With respect to street racing, there's a sharp increase in the rate of fines, suspensions and convictions. The fines are increased from the \$200 minimum and the \$1,000 maximum that currently exist to a \$2,000 minimum and a \$10,000 maximum. Similarly, the suspension is increased to a maximum of two years for a first offence and a maximum of 10 years for a subsequent offence. In addition, there will be a seven-day administrative driver's licence suspension and vehicle impoundment.

While it's important to stress that some feel it is important that these penalties be stiffened, there are also those who think these penalties do not go far enough. One of the previous members mentioned Mr. Coté, the Rockwood gentleman who lost his daughter and son-in-law in an alleged street racing incident last year. He commented, "But a seven-day licence suspension is like nothing at all. A year or something would be meaningful. I just think the tougher the deterrents, the better. It's senseless killing of innocent people, and of the people doing the street racing. Having those cars is their biggest thrill, and if it was taken away from them indefinitely that would be much more of a deterrent." So there are certainly those who feel that those penalties need to be increased even more for street racing.

Another concern that has been raised, in addition to whether the penalties are stiff enough, is the issue of whether there are the necessary teeth in this legislation with respect to the enforcement aspect of it. Benedikt Fischer, an associate professor at U of T's Centre of Criminology, has stated, "Laws on the books are one thing, but the question is, how will it be applied? Will the police go out and be able to effectively apply this, or will it be some paper tiger somewhere in a legal paragraph that will not be allowed to have any teeth? That is the question that needs to be answered." I know that's something that many groups will want to speak to, and I trust there will be sufficient time dedicated for them to voice those concerns.

Another concern that's been voiced by my colleague the member for Oak Ridges deals with the failure of the bill to prohibit the so-called after-market products, such as the nitrous oxide power boosters that can typically be found on street racing vehicles to increase acceleration and horsepower. I'm by no means an expert in these matters, but I'm told that this significantly adds to the power of the vehicle. It's found in many of these street-racing vehicles and adds to the so-called thrill of street racing, I guess, which the member for Oak Ridges strongly feels needs to be dealt with as part of this legislation, and to be taken away.

We would distinguish in this case between those vehicles that are operating on our streets as opposed to recreational vehicles. I understand that with respect to street vehicles it has been suggested that any ability to access these power boosters from either the driver or vehicle side of the car should be taken away so they cannot be used in street racing. This is a significant concern that has been spoken about, and I would urge the government members to take heed of that in the deliberations as we go forward.

The other section of the bill that has not been spoken about very much is under the newly named Civil Remedies Act, which puts more teeth into the street-racing solutions that have been proposed. The penalties under this act are such that it could be given by an order of a judge of the Superior Court of Justice to actually impound a vehicle that's been found to have been involved in street racing and allow for it to be forfeited.

Not only is it impounded; it's gone, and could be sold in order to put money into a special-purpose fund that would allow for anybody who's been the victim or has suffered any pecuniary or non-pecuniary losses as a result of street racing to access this fund. I'm not aware of the details of this fund as yet, but it certainly seems that the idea of having a judge able to allow for the forfeiture of a vehicle is one of the issues this act was meant to address in the first place. For unlawful activity, the "proceeds of crime," so to speak, to be forfeited to the crown and used for compensation for victims is certainly worthy. I would again urge all members to support that and flesh it out with a little bit more detail on exactly how that's meant to proceed.

1730

In conclusion, we support the aims of this bill. We certainly would urge the government members to listen to the concerns that are being expressed, both with respect to the stiffness of the penalties allowed and the teeth that really need to be put into the enforcement if this bill is to achieve the goals it's meant to achieve. Thank you very much for the opportunity to add my comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: I listened carefully to the comments made by the member for Whitby–Ajax. The member for Whitby–Ajax, Mrs. Elliott, has made a mark on this Legislature since her election here as an articulate and effective member of the chamber and one who has a particular commitment to safer communities, including safer streets, roads and highways. It's a pleasure to hear her speak to this particular bit of legislation.

I'm going to have a chance in about eight, nine, 10 minutes' time to speak to the bill, unfortunately for only 20 minutes. I will be commenting about Bill 203 in the context, quite frankly, of the real world. My concern is that this bill is merely symbolic and that it will do far less than any of us hope, and far less than some of you believe, to reduce the actual phenomenon of street racing, whether it's organized or spontaneous, the two forms being prevalent here in Ontario.

As for the colour of flashing lights, I'm going to have some things to say about that too, because it's my view that Commissioner Julian "Martha Stewart" Fantino, in his redecorating orgy, repainting all these police cars—I'm concerned that he's going to again second-guess the black-and-white. They may not coordinate well with the blue-and-red lighting. Far be it from me to suggest that spending \$500 per OPP cruiser to repaint them is a gross waste of money when there's scarce money available for policing; but, hey, who am I?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I'd just like to address something the member from York South–Weston said earlier about previous records. Previous records are not being expunged; that's not what we're doing. I think he is misinterpreting the facts. We are proposing a five-year look back for drinking and driving and 10 years for street racing. If you committed drinking and driving in one range, when you were 20 years old, you would

receive a three-day suspension. Then, if you did it again over five years later, you would only get a three-day suspension again. It's not forgiveness; it's recognizing the fact that you're starting over with that same clear record after five years.

One of the things the early ignition interlock program will prevent is repeat drinking-and-driving incidents, because people have been driving cars without insurance, and people have been taking these privileges. They should not be driving, but they are driving. That's the case. So with the ignition interlock, we will have a situation where a person can get back his driving privileges, and when he gets them back, he has to undergo certain education and treatment for the condition that is causing the problem. That's so important, because that's the situation. We have a lot of people who are driving cars and are not insured, and they're continuing to drink. This should make that change very beneficial to safety on the roads. That's one of the things that was recognized, that we don't take enough care to educate and change people's ways. That's a big part of this bill.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a few seconds here to comment on this. I want to thank the speaker before, from Ajax–Whitby, on her presentation. As Mr. Kormos said, she's very thorough when she does get up here to speak and explain things.

I understand that we may want to support this bill if there are some amendments. It's more of an urban problem, I think, than rural. Next, we won't be able to race with our tractors or something. They'll come up with something over there, some more debate on that. But as it's mainly an urban bill, I'm sure it will go out to committee, because we don't like rural and northern bills. We don't want to send them out to committee. They must stay here in Toronto, where no one will come down to speak against them. So I'm sure this one will get to go out somewhere and people will have their say.

There's nothing wrong with having safe streets. Everybody wants that. There's no doubt about that. But we have to be careful that we don't legislate everything into the ground. There are some things that do cause concern. If we get some amendments and things like that, we certainly will take a look at them in our caucus and we may be able to support the bill. I'm just concerned that every time this government comes up with another bill, we have more red tape, more laws, and I wonder where they're going to get the people to enforce all this. If we look at the Ministry of Natural Resources, we have hardly anybody left there to enforce anything anymore. That ministry is pretty well gutted, so they won't be able to help the OPP do this.

There are a lot of things that go along with this bill, and I'd be very surprised if the government across the way has even thought about that. They just love getting these bills in here and making themselves—they think—look wonderful to the world, with the nice titles they give to bills like this.

Mr. Ferreira: As always, I enjoyed listening to the member from Whitby–Ajax and her presentation on this

bill. I want to pick up very briefly on the comments made by her colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, specifically around the impact on law enforcement. The director of government relations and communications for the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police raised this very issue. His concern is the impact that legislation will bear on the resources of our already strained police officers. His point is a very good one. He wants to see that this government, at the same time that they're bringing forward this legislation, this initiative, also commit to providing law enforcement with all the tools, the mechanisms—perhaps extra officers on the streets and highways of the province—to be able to properly enforce it. So I want to thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for raising that issue. I thought it was worthwhile to mention the concerns expressed by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

In my remaining time, I want to go back to the member for Whitby-Ajax and the education component. Last November, the Minister of Transportation stated that the government would be coming forward with some kind of education and awareness-building initiative around the issue of drinking and driving and extreme driving. We haven't seen that. I'd like to know why we haven't seen it. I think it should come as part of this legislation, certainly side by side, and I'd like the member from Whitby-Ajax to perhaps talk about the need for increased educational and awareness measures.

1740

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Whitby-Ajax, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Elliott: I would first of all like to state that I appreciate the very interesting comments with respect to Bill 203 by the members for Niagara Centre, Ottawa-Orléans, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and York South-Weston.

The concern was expressed by the member for Niagara Centre that the provisions in this bill were largely symbolic, and I certainly hope that's not the case, because I think we all realize that there are many families out there that have lost loved ones and that the public at large have a significant interest in making sure that the problems arising around impaired driving and street racing are going to be addressed.

The members for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and York South-Weston have also expressed some concern with respect to the enforcement provisions and whether there is going to be adequate law enforcement personnel and resources available in order to enforce the provisions of this legislation. Again, I certainly trust, if effort is going to be made to pass this legislation, that there are the teeth in the legislation and the enforcement abilities available around it.

Finally, with respect to the issue around education with respect to impaired driving and street racing, I think a lot certainly has been done in recent years with respect to educating youth about the dangers of impaired driving. I think we still need to do more, and we need to embark again on a campaign and a public safety and information

program with respect to the dangers of street racing, because I think there's still an allure to that which needs to be dispelled by giving our young people the facts about the dangers of street racing and the tragedy that it can cause for many people across our province.

I thank all members for their comments and, again, I would urge the government members to take these comments into consideration as we move forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: First, let's make it very clear that this does not create a new offence here in the province of Ontario. Section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act has been in existence for years and years and years. Again, the language used in this bill is very consistent with the language that historically was used in section 172.

I'm grateful, I should tell you, to Dominique Valiquet, who wrote the research paper for the Library of Parliament on Bill C-19, which is of course the federal amendments to the Criminal Code that beef up the federal provisions dealing with street racing. It's interesting because in that research paper it is noted that the problem of street racing is seen in rural areas, but it's more widespread in urban centres.

I don't want the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to think that—well, not this Parliament—Parliaments of days gone by have ignored rural Ontario. Indeed, if you take a look at section 173 of the Highway Traffic Act—section 172 makes it an offence to race a car on a highway—section 173 makes it an offence to race or drive furiously any horse or other animal on a highway. So you see, this type of outrageous behaviour is contemplated as occurring oh, so well in rural Ontario as much as on urban streets.

We're all increasingly familiar—there is a proliferation of street racing and, again, a huge increase in the deaths and the injuries, and there has been research done and reported. One of the other things that Valiquet in her research paper notes is that street racing also occurs in the middle of urban traffic. For any of you who, like me, drive up the QEW to get here to Toronto from, let's say, the Niagara region, it seems that just about when you hit Trafalgar Road you're joined, as you're Toronto-bound, with this very phenomenon: street racing occurring in the middle of urban traffic—a pair or a trio of smaller but very fast cars weaving in and out of traffic, initially scaring the daylighters out of other drivers, but obviously creating huge hazards for themselves and for other people using the roadway. Once again—this is the point that I want to make—they're almost impossible to apprehend. Especially when it's taking place in thick, dense traffic—and there is the rare moment on the QEW, just like on the 401, north of Toronto, where it isn't thick, dense traffic—the police can't pursue people. The police can't pull people over. The enforcement of highway laws has become increasingly dangerous for police officers because of the mere fact of the danger inherent in going through that traffic themselves and signalling for somebody to pull over.

Here we've got Bill 203, the amendments to section 172. Let's focus on it for a minute. We've got this in the shadow of Bill C-19, which passed third reading on December 14 and received royal assent; it's the law now. So Bill C-19 in fact beefs up the Criminal Code provisions, which always were, quite frankly, far more appropriate: dangerous driving and criminal negligence in the operation of a motor vehicle. Quite frankly, if you want serious penalties to apply, I suggest you want prosecutions under the Criminal Code. This is the fear that I expressed to you earlier. All of our constituency offices have been subject to phone calls expressing concerns around plea bargaining in our stressed and overburdened courts. I want my friends over here to listen carefully. Almost inevitably—or perhaps not almost inevitably, but one would hope that a Criminal Code charge would be laid, when there's evidence, along with the Highway Traffic Act charge. Understand what's going to happen. In the course of plea bargaining, in an effort to reduce the load on the courts, in an effort to expedite matters through the court, defence counsel are going to be offering up the Highway Traffic Act racing charge, section 172, if the crown drops the Criminal Code charge of dangerous driving or criminal negligence, unless, of course, there's serious bodily harm or death, in which case it's the rare crown who would agree to that type of proposal unless the crown had serious problems in terms of prosecuting.

So understand what's happening here. You're opening the door with section 172 and its higher penalties to it being used as a fast and speedy alternative to a Criminal Code conviction. Because, quite frankly, the increased fines, in my view, do precious little. When it comes to criminal misbehaviour, almost inevitably it's not the severity of the penalty that's the deterrent; it's the likelihood of apprehension. Do you understand what I'm saying? People wouldn't commit murder if it was the severity of the penalty that was the deterrent. There's precious few people who commit murder who don't understand that it can have some serious consequences, like life imprisonment. But they don't intend to get caught.

In the case of organized street racing—and there's some interesting discussion of that Valiquet paper, because she explains, "While some street races occur spontaneously—in response to a challenge—between drivers who do not know each other, others are well organized and take place before hundreds of spectators. The event is announced, the length of the improvised track is defined, and sometimes streets are even blocked. Someone is in charge of giving the starting signal and timing the race, while lookouts keep an eye out for the police, using laptops, cell phones, portable transceivers and radar detectors."

You see, they don't do this intending to get caught. It appears that street racers, and this level of organized street racing, is using some pretty sophisticated technology to avoid detection. The tragedy is that you only catch people and lay charges, not only after the event, but

after the event when somebody is injured. That's the tragedy. And if it's a minor injury, people are unlikely to report the event, but that means, even more seriously, it's when there's serious injury or death. Take a look at the illustrations we've had. Charges have been laid in the instances where there have been deadly consequences as a result of the street racing.

This, then, begs the question, why is the government not being very specific about incorporating the fuel systems provision in the Klees bill? One of the admirable elements of that bill is the provision that says—this is the private member's bill; Bill 122; this gives the cops half a chance at apprehending some of these people—"No person shall drive"—I'm condensing this—"a motor vehicle equipped with a nitrous oxide fuel system," which I understand is the hopped-up fuel of choice to turn your machine into a road rocket, unless the container "is completely disconnected from the other parts of the system;

"(b) the disconnection can be observed by looking at the interior or exterior of the motor vehicle;

"(c) the disconnected parts cannot be reconnected from the driver or passenger seats."

1750

What this does, in my view, and why I'm a fan of that provision of the Klees bill, is it gives police the opportunity, when they pull somebody over on the highway who may not be, *de facto*, racing at the time—but if they've got the nitrous oxide hooked up, it's a pretty reasonable inference to draw that they have just been, that they plan on it or that they're going to, and that person can then be charged.

Under the legislation as it's existed historically—I agree—and as it's proposed in Bill 203, it's highly unlikely, unless the police deploy a whole lot of police officers working under cover doing surveillance—that's what they'd have to do to infiltrate street racing operations, and that's horribly expensive. Look, cops are hard pressed to deliver core services in almost every municipality in the province of Ontario because of the funding restrictions they face. So we're hard pressed to call on them to conduct specialized investigations—very labour-intensive, that involve surveillance, possible use of under-cover police officers and then still risk the possibility of not getting a charge laid, or at least not getting a conviction. So the likelihood of arresting and charging people in these organized street races is very, very low unless and until there's an injury, because then the police are drawn into it because somebody's injured or killed and they're taken to hospital and the process goes from there.

The spontaneous racing, the kind that most of us are familiar with—I've never been to an organized street race. I've never been to one, never witnessed one. But I have no reason whatsoever to doubt that they take place. The evidence is clear in terms of the consequences that are well publicized. But there isn't a single one of us who hasn't witnessed the spontaneous racing—look, I give credit to the authors, the drafters of the bill; legislative counsel gets kudos from me for including language like

“stunt,” “performing a stunt,” because I suspect that’s designed to accommodate, if you will, the single car that’s not in a race with other cars on the QEW but the guy or gal who’s zipping back and forth, in and out of traffic and squeezing between rows of traffic. We’ve all witnessed them, small displacement engines just revving away, and the car’s going to beat the band with, sadly, usually younger drivers. I say “sadly” because these are the least experienced drivers. All of us reflect back when we were young drivers: We of course thought we were good drivers, but oftentimes we learned the hard way, hopefully in most cases not tragically, that there was still a lot left to learn. That’s one of the sad things, that it’s mostly younger drivers who engage in this type of activity.

The other spontaneous racing—I was at a committee hearing where I heard a narration about a Mercedes-Benz, one of the hyper-high-priced ones that are customized by Mercedes-Benz, meeting a Porsche at a stoplight. This, of course, doesn’t tend to be young drivers. This is your basic Yorkville crowd, the boulevardiers. Every time I see one of those \$160,000 Porsches or Mercedes-Benzes on the highway, I say to myself, “Some people still aren’t paying enough income tax.” Look, the GST on one of those vehicles buys most people’s cars, so these are people—they’re the stop sign, they’re the testosterone, the bravado. They tend not to be young people. They tend to be middle-aged males with gold chains and coiffures that are designed to impress much younger women whom they have no business trying to impress.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: You know exactly what I’m talking about, Ms. Bountrogianni. I’m not telling stories out of school here. That’s an entirely different issue.

The other issue, then, is policing; just plain, old-fashioned policing. I say to the minister across here: She travels that route. She comes from Hamilton along the QEW; I start down in Welland. How many times have you seen driving conduct that made you wish there was at least one OPP cruiser on the highway, where you could at least honk as you’re going past and point to the car that just sped past you in the right-hand lane? We don’t have sufficient numbers of police patrolling our highways. It’s a simple, plain fact. That’s aside from the inherent dangers in pulling people over on the very, very intensely trafficked parts of the 401—impossible to pull somebody over. Similarly, on the QEW: impossible to pull somebody over, never mind to pursue anybody; the police officer is going to put himself and a whole lot of other people at risk.

Which then takes me to the incredible, as I say, Julian “Martha Stewart” Fantino obsession with spending \$500 per police car on new paint jobs for cars that have perfectly good paint jobs. For the life of me, I don’t get it. I get the additional lights, the blue lights to make those police officers safer when they pull their car over. The member for Brant—that’s Mr. Levac—remembers well, and I joined him in the effort to amplify the types of

lighting that are available to police cruisers and other emergency vehicles in the interest of safety. So I have no qualms about that whatsoever.

I haven’t asked—I’ve got to find out. Somebody’s going to tell me how many OPP cruisers there are in the province of Ontario, and we’ll do a multiplication of that times \$500 and find out exactly how many thousands, tens of thousands—why, was it hundreds of thousands of dollars? As I said earlier, is Commissioner Fantino channelling the Designer Guys? Is he similarly going to want to reupholster the seats with grey velour so that they match the black-and-white paint jobs? Is this some sort of obsession, some side of Julian Fantino that’s crying to be released, to be freed, to come to the fore? Perhaps we could have him come into the Legislature. Maybe he’d like to do something with the curtains or the carpeting. Maybe we have some colour conflicts in here that he wants to address.

I repeat: It is nuts that we’re repainting police cruisers. I appreciate that the member for Simcoe North—that was Mr. Dunlop, talking earlier—was defending the paint jobs, saying that they made the highways safer. I don’t know; I think he was reaching a little far on that one. I think he was grasping at straws. In his zeal to show himself friendly and supportive of Commissioner Fantino, I think he was pushing it beyond any reasonable limit.

Let’s also talk about this whole business about licence suspension. Understand that the—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: I’m sorry? Repeat that.

Mr. Ferreira: It’s 1,200 patrol cars.

Mr. Kormos: It’s 1,200 cruisers times \$500. Get the BlackBerry out. Put it in calculator mode and figure that one out.

Mr. Ferreira: It’s 600K.

Mr. Kormos: Six hundred thousand dollars to repaint police cruisers that have perfectly good paint jobs? That’s the sort of stuff that drives taxpayers crazy, that has them banging their heads, saying, “What kind of Alice in Wonderland world is this?” It’s not nuts; it’s stupid.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Calm down.

Mr. Kormos: Ms. Bountrogianni, you’re a fan of blowing 600 Gs? I know I’m not to refer to the member by name, but I couldn’t remember the riding. The minister.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Speaker, we’re in a dilemma, aren’t we? No, we’re okay? We’re okay? I’ve got but a minute and 55 seconds left, but the Speaker’s—

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Folks, please accommodate me, because we’re talking about \$600,000 that Commissioner Fantino is spending, repainting police cruisers that have perfectly good paint jobs.

If, when he orders new cruisers as you replace them—the Crown Vics—if you want to order them in black and

white, if they come in black and white—but you know what? I bet you the public has to bear the cost of painting them anyway. I bet you that the plant down in St. Thomas doesn't deliver black-and-white Crown Vics; I bet you dollars to doughnuts. This is going to cost the people of Ontario.

What's the obsession with black and white, anyway? Is there any arguable reason, other than to confuse the public, because quite frankly, unless you're the member from Lanark—Carleton or, oh, I don't know, the minister of fitness, you don't remember black-and-white cruisers; you don't identify with them. The only time you saw black-and-white cruisers was on American sitcoms—Car 54, Where Are You?

The problem is that most Ontarians identify a police cruiser by the presence that we understand: the white cruiser. Besides, let's not kid ourselves. It's not that cruiser that's going to catch us speeding; it's the unmarked cruiser; it's the dark blue one with the tinted windows that's going to get you, where you've realized, "My God, I saw you. I passed you. I should have known who you were."

I'll be back next time we call the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: It being slightly past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned, and will return at 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 23 April 2007

Lundi 23 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts, when Bill 184 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on general government; and

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, on May 2, 2007, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and May 7, 2007, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon for the purpose of conducting public hearings on the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 p.m. on May 8, 2007. No later than 5 p.m. on May 9, 2007, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill, and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than May 10, 2007. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That on the day the order for third reading for the bill is called, the time available for debate up to 5:50 p.m. or 9:20 p.m. as the case may be, shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Bentley has moved government motion 334. Mr. Bentley.

1850

Hon. Mr. Bentley: When the Ontario government launched an extensive review of the Endangered Species Act in May 2006, it was acting on a commitment to update and strengthen the legislation that protects the province's native species at risk and their habitats. Of course, we're having this discussion just following Earth Day and Earth Day weekend, when people in every one of our communities are concerned about sustainability of our environment, concerned about global warming, concerned about greening our communities, whether they be large or small, wherever they happen to be, and concerned about ensuring that the species we have grown up with and depend on will remain in the future. That is the background against which this debate is being held. The Endangered Species Act, 2007, is based on the findings of that review.

This legislation would replace the outdated Endangered Species Act and significantly expand protection for the province's species at risk. Although we don't often hear about species at risk in the headlines of the news, everyone in every single one of the communities in this province knows there are species which have been natural to those communities which are at risk, whether from encroaching development, whether from climate change, whether from the effects of human or industrial habitation.

If passed by this House, the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, would be among the strongest species-at-risk legislation in North America. It would set a benchmark for protection and recovery of species at risk and launch a new era of natural heritage protection in our province.

During the consultation process, extensive time was taken to ensure that we heard from all those who might be interested—from the public, from aboriginal groups, from a wide range of stakeholder groups and organizations. Of course, they included developers, environmentalists, people in large and small communities and the resource industry sectors.

Ontario's more than 30,000 species and their habitats are important to the biological, social and economic vitality of the province, and of these, more than 175 have been specifically identified as being at risk, which means that they may well disappear from the province if their rate of decline continues. Of course, when we talk about 175 species, other species depend on those species for their own survival. So if they disappear, we may well be starting a much more significant threat than even that significant threat to the species of this province.

By working to reverse the rate of species decline in our province, we will ensure that future generations of Ontarians benefit from a healthier and diverse natural environment. Because the habitat for many species at risk is found on private land, voluntary stewardship is essential to achieving any kind of success in reversing this rate of species decline. The proposed legislation includes an Ontario species-at-risk stewardship program which would provide much-needed support and incentives for stewardship activities by landowners, resource users and conservation organizations. Of course, the best course of action is to prevent species from declining in the first place through responsible land use practices.

It may be surprising to members of this House, but known to the one or two who have been around for many years, that this is the first time since the Endangered Species Act was passed in 1971 that our legislation has undergone a thorough review. Imagine that: the first time that it has undergone a thorough review. One can imagine the changes in virtually every community in this province since then, and to think that those communities are encroaching on the natural environment—it is almost beyond belief that it has not undergone a thorough review since that time. It is without doubt out of date, limited in its ability to adequately provide protection and recovery of species at risk or recovery of their habitat.

This legislation includes a much stronger commitment to species recovery, more support for groups and individuals who voluntarily participate in stewardship activities to protect both essential habitat and green space, and stronger enforcement provisions. The proposed legislation includes a science-based process for identifying and listing species at risk. It also requires the automatic protection of species on the list and their habitats. Protection of the species without the habitat is really no protection at all. Meaningful habitat protection is a priority.

The proposed legislation balances strong protection measures with flexibility to encourage greater and more effective stewardship and recovery efforts. Every one of Ontario's 30,000 species makes a unique contribution to our province's rich natural heritage, and every action we

take to protect species at risk will contribute to a healthier and more abundant natural environment for future generations of Ontarians. I urge every member of this House to quickly, appropriately ensure the passage of this legislation so we do not miss another moment in protecting the species at risk, the species that may be at risk and the future natural environment of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss Bill 184, although I am very disappointed with the closure motion—absolutely. I think there should be a lot more consultation.

The previous minister spoke about consultation. I find surprising the large number of groups faxing me to say that it wasn't consultation; it was an information session that they went to. Even the First Nations community, when I was in the north two weeks ago, specifically stated—and laughed at it when I spoke to the deputy chief about the consultation process—that the consultation process was a mere information session. They had no consultation there.

It's good to see that the Minister of Natural Resources is in the House today, because I know we are discussing the closure aspect and MNR-related issues and I hope he notices that the new regs are out. Mind you, the fishing—it opens this weekend—regs that you're so much looking forward to are not out. I wonder why. The feds came through with the DFO changes for a number of species, but apparently there is some concern that they didn't approve all the stuff to allow the regs to be published in time.

I don't think the minister grasps the impact of not having those regs out there in a number of ways. Not only that; in the regs that were released, the hunting regulations that have just recently come out—our office received our copies today—and that we get requests for on a regular basis, he's created a new problem. The problem is that he has allowed three advertisers, and only three advertisers, inside there who are retailers of outdoor products. The difficulty is that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of outdoors outlets that provide regulations on a free basis to everyone. Now that you have three American companies, I might add, that are advertising in there, these stores are saying, "Why would I promote a competitor?" And guess what? The regulations that were released won't be distributed in those locations. If you want to get them, if you want to find out, find them someplace else. The ministry went through this problem in the past and it was addressed. There are a considerable number of things.

For example, the fishing regulations not coming out: NOTO, the Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters, heads down south in about February and does all of their trade shows. When they go down there, they promote Ontario. They take all of the regs with them. And when they ain't got no regs, they ain't got no customers and no promotion of Ontario happening, because it's just not there. They can't get that message out. I know for a fact that when this question came up with the previous govern-

ment, all it took was changing the printing time at the printer. That's all that was required to get it done, and it got done.

It's so difficult. Some people are dependent on booking their holidays for those things and they don't have all the detailed information. I know other individuals who in the past had waited and booked the wrong dates because the regs hadn't come out to inform them. There are a lot of issues coming forward.

And we're talking about Bill 184. I could go on quite long, and I certainly hope we get interjections, because I love the opportunity to talk about some of these things. When you look at the debate from the past and you look at the PAs' comments, one of the areas that cause concern is a species at risk in Ontario. The difficulty with this is that animals don't know boundaries.

I should mention first that I am one of the biggest supporters of, and as a matter of fact I happen to know, the individual who regulated more species in the past than any other Minister of Natural Resources, because all it took was the political will. But one thing that's happening here is that it comes to the cabinet table, there is opposition and they can't answer the questions, so it goes to the back burner. I remember the minister speaking about the butternut tree. He spoke quite extensively about the impact of the butternut tree—the diseased butternut tree that you spoke of, Minister.

Implement the plan. Put the implementation plan in place, and that will allow for the cutting of that diseased species for the reintroduction to take place. If there are things out there that you have, implement those implementation plans that already allow you to do those things.

No. At the cabinet table it's extremely difficult to get these things through because of the impact. What is the area required for the five-lined skink to live? For those who don't know, the five-lined skink is the only lizard that actually lives in the province of Ontario. It's around—the Hastings area is probably one of the best areas to talk about. How much space does it require? So you implement a habitat program for that. Who is to determine?

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We've gone on and we've spoken about species at risk in Ontario. If you look at the lists, you talk about the bald eagle in southern Ontario as being—I think it was listed as “special concern” or “extirpated,” which means they're in existence but they're not in southern Ontario. Remember we spoke about the fact that species and animals don't know boundaries like we do? The concern here is that we're going to set artificial boundaries, and now we have a northern bald eagle and a southern bald eagle, and it's not happening.

It's the same thing with other things. I hope the minister talks about what's the intention with, for example, the Slate Island caribou, which effectively is a woodland caribou that migrated across to the Slate Islands in Lake Superior and, because of the food forage they eat, they've turned a somewhat different colour, a kind of slate grey. The belief is that it could be a subspecies, much like the

Algonquin wolf—there is no official Algonquin wolf, but we've declared that a special area. So this new committee will determine what and how to do these things.

The concern there is that there is overlying legislation. There is lists of bodies, the COSEWIC organizations that have the ability to determine, “Yes, woodland caribou is a threatened species, however, not in Ontario,” because we may have anywhere from 8,000 to 10,000—it depends on which biologist you speak to in the ministry; there are several pockets throughout the province—and in other parts of the country there may not be. For example, the barren-ground caribou: The report on the Hudson-James Bay lowland—I actually had to dig for this one; it was quite extensive. There's a very in-depth report in there, and I would recommend the minister get a copy of it. They determined that the Hudson-James Bay caribou is actually a cross between barren-ground and woodland caribou. What does that mean? Does that mean that it's a new subspecies? Well, quite possibility a new agency who may have that as a priority concern—I seem to remember getting caribou dolls, stuffed animals, at one time last year about this thing—may determine that is, much like the bald eagle, and it's listed in the books: northern Ontario and southern Ontario. And it may have implications there that will cost the ministry huge amounts of money.

One of the organizations that was very concerned approached me and said their estimates when they reviewed this—and they spent an extensive amount of time at it—was about \$200 million to implement this. Currently, they've got \$18 million over a four-year period to implement this entire process. There is a process in place now.

I have to tell you, I am a big supporter. As a matter of fact, last summer I happened to be driving by a marsh area and I looked over at the side of the road and I could see what I thought was a Blandings turtle. For those who don't know, a Blandings turtle is very similar to a map turtle—a southern map turtle, I might add; it's somewhat difficult to tell the difference. So I pulled over and stopped. Actually, it had been hit by a car. I did some short-term rehabilitation of the animal. What's the name of that show? The Red Green show. Duct tape works wonders on damaged turtles. But that turtle wandered away. It was actually a map turtle; it wasn't a Blandings.

The point being, what's going to take place for the municipalities? If a municipality is going to move forward in the future, are they going to have to do a species-at-risk analysis in order to determine whether there's anything of concern in that area before moving forward with a major project? And what is the length of time? Because, as we know, birds migrate on an annual basis. As mentioned here—the bald eagle is a perfect one, or the great grey owl.

There are other agencies and NGOs, non-government organizations, who are extremely concerned and feel they haven't had the opportunity to come forward and discuss this. I would have hoped that we would go on the road to hear from the various parts of the province, whether it is

Kenora, Thunder Bay, Timmins, down in the eastern part, the western part and central Ontario, in order to get a perspective from those communities on the impact of this.

The trapping community is very concerned with this, particularly with three animals that are there: the grey fox, the American badger and the wolverine. According to them, they don't know of a badger trapped in the province of Ontario ever having been sold at the fur auctions. Here comes the difficulty—and I hope the minister addresses this issue: What takes place is, these fur sales come in from all over North America, where there are no problems with endangered aspects of these species.

So an American badger, which, if you look in Manitoba or some of the western provinces, is effectively somewhat like a groundhog—there are large numbers of them, and they're kind of in the same volume out there. They would come into the province of Ontario to be sold at fur auctions, and they're sold around the world. I think the next one is coming up in Mississauga, where it's expected that about \$100 million worth of fur will be sold. I think at the last one, 36 countries from around the world came in and purchased these goods. Not only that, but they shipped them in.

The way the legislation is currently written, as expressed to me by those associations, it will eliminate the sale of those particular goods at their fur auctions because of the way it's listed inside the legislation. The concern is that the wolverine—yes, there have been some coincidental catches of wolverine in the northern part of Ontario. However, to their knowledge, a grey fox or a badger has never come through on those sales.

What's going to happen with those industries? The one sale house alone does about \$250 million. They're talking about relocating to other parts. Quite frankly, there is a large number of issues I could go on and talk about for the entire 51 minutes, but I know my colleagues have a great deal of information that they'd like to mention.

One of the things I'd like to talk about is the peregrine falcon, for example. When the minister spoke in the House about this, he spoke about peregrines coming back in. But I don't think—and he should have mentioned that actually it was the domesticated peregrines that are responsible for the reintroduction. The falcon clubs in Ontario came forward, and quite frankly, if the minister had known—it was a former Liberal minister. Lyn McLeod was the minister at the time, and I was on the committee that worked on that, so I know a little bit about what took place. I dealt with the minister on some of that stuff. Those agencies were responsible. In the event that a species is at risk, what happens to domesticated ones that come in, that are currently domesticated, or are brought in from other jurisdictions for reintroduction purposes?

Another one the minister mentioned was the wild turkey, which was extirpated in the 1900s for a number of reasons—over-harvesting, no seasons at that particular time, as well as change in the farming communities and the harvesting in the province of Ontario. But there was

no mention of the fact that the community that reintroduced and live-trapped all those turkeys and brought them back into Ontario was, as a matter of fact, the outdoors and the hunting community.

There are a lot of issues that can be brought forward. Quite frankly, I'm disappointed at the motion as read for closure today because it limits organizations' ability to come and present here at Queen's Park. Two days is a very limited time. I've had a number of faxes from the Ontario Water Power Association about their strong concerns and what the impact is going to be. I believe that the only species that really needs to be regulated—

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Here we go. This is funny.

Mr. Ouellette: —is the human species, because that's the one that's impacting everything. As the minister said, this is really funny. He thinks it's really funny, that it's a big joke. He has to understand that species at risk is a strong concern for a lot of people, and they take a lot of action and do a lot of things. As a matter of fact, the previous minister implemented a program and offered help to organizations to reintroduce the northern bobwhite quail.

Interjections.

Mr. Ouellette: They don't like that. But that's actually what happened. You have to have the intestinal fortitude to come forward at the cabinet table and move forward on it. The stuff is there that needs to be done. This smoke-and-mirrors stuff ain't going to make a big difference. People are going to feel warm and fuzzy out there, but at the end of the day it's not going to happen.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It doesn't make any difference.

Mr. Ouellette: The minister says it doesn't make any difference. Yes, it does make a difference. What has to happen is that you have to have the political will to come forward at the cabinet table to make the changes necessary.

I appreciate the opportunity. I know my colleagues have some other things to say about it as well.

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Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to have a chance once again to talk a little bit about Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts.

I'm going to talk a little bit about it, although I have had a chance to talk about the bill previously, just about a week ago. Interestingly enough, that doesn't usually happen. Once you've debated a bill, usually that's your turn for that particular reading that we're in, and of course this being second reading, I've already contributed. But the reason I'm given the opportunity once again to make some remarks about this bill is of course the motion that we're debating tonight is not the actual bill itself: it's a motion to invoke closure on the bill. In other words, the government wants to shut down debate on this bill, and that's what we're debating tonight, the fact that the government is not prepared to allow members from all sides—its own side and the two opposition parties—to bring forward issues and concerns or, in some cases, congratulations on the issues that are outlined in the bill.

It's interesting, because the last time we were here debating this bill happened to be a night when a particular reception was taking place in our dining room downstairs. I believe it was in the dining room. Perhaps it was in room 228; I'm not actually sure. It was in room 228, now that I think. It was by an organization that was trying to bring awareness to the members about these very issues, about endangered species. It was quite a fun evening, and many of the speakers who got up to speak that evening, including myself, spent some time talking about the species that we became honorary guardians of that evening. It was quite a fun night. I'll just recall that I was given the honour of protecting the orange spotted sunfish. My friend from Beaches-East York, who is currently sitting in the Speaker's chair, I can recall that his species was called the least bittern.

As you went through all the members in this place, it was very interesting to see how, in some cases—not all, but in some cases—the species we were made honorary guardians of sometimes tended to resemble ourselves in some way. Orange spotted: of course, as a New Democrat, orange is a colour that I like very much. In fact, the member from Beaches-East York, least bittern: Everybody knows what an affable person the member from Beaches-East York is. He certainly is not “bittern” at all.

Nonetheless, it is kind of frustrating for people in opposition particularly when the government invokes closure on a bill. There is no doubt that this government has waited until the 11th hour to bring in a number of very important bills. I will be in committee later on this week on one of those bills; they finally decided to move on the independence of the child advocate office. In fact, I can see the minister responsible for democratic renewal sitting across the way. When she was Minister of Children and Youth Services, she was the first one on the government side to make the promise that the child advocate would be independent in the province of Ontario. It's finally now, again, in the 11th hour of this government's mandate, that it has decided to bring forward the child advocate bill.

Having said that—same thing here, right? We are at the very last minute of this government's mandate. The reason they are actually bringing closure motions left, right and centre is because they realize they had better do something to ingratiate themselves with the voters of this province because there is certainly a huge pile of disappointment that emanates from every corner of every community from one end of this province to the other. People are simply extremely disappointed. It's major lunch-bag letdown in a huge way with this government and its lack of effectiveness in its term thus far.

So here they are in a mad scramble at the last minute trying to get through some things that they think will make people like them again. I don't know if that's a good strategy. What I can tell you, though, is that it's a very obvious strategy, one that is very apparent as we continue to have to debate closure motions. The problem becomes, as you rush these things out the door and try to make it look like you're actually implementing some of

the things you had promised to implement, it becomes very, very clear that it doesn't matter what the details look like, as long as you can spin it out there, the fact that you're getting something done—“Nobody is really going to pay too much attention to the details, so we're not really concerned.”

But when it comes to important issues, particularly of an environmental nature, and certainly this bill is one of them and another one is one we were debating last week on water-taking, these are extremely important pieces of legislation. To simply shut down debate and ram them through the process is dangerous, at the very least. It could lead to some major problems down the road if we don't give the bills the scrutiny they need and if we don't take an honest approach to reviewing the pros and cons as we go through the process. So, by invoking closure, we end up in a situation where that debate, that critique, that criticism is not given its full opportunity, and that's certainly shameful, to say the least.

When I last spoke about the bill particularly—it's interesting, because that was last week and of course over the weekend we had Earth Day celebrations in most communities across the province. Certainly in my community, I attended a number of Earth Day events. One of them was an annual Earth Day event which occurs down at Princess Point. It starts off as a bit of a walk, a five-kilometre walk, from Bayfront Park to Princess Point, and then follows up with an afternoon of planting trees in the Royal Botanical Gardens. In fact that is the organization that provides the trees and puts together the coordination and the effort of making sure there are enough trees for all the people so they can do the planting.

Interestingly enough, on Earth Day this year—it must have been 20 degrees or 21 degrees—it was very, very warm and there were thousands of people out to plant trees. Last year when we were doing the same planting, it was not very warm at all. In fact, it was fairly cold, drizzling and raining—a terrible day. And the year before that, it was actually drizzling, raining and snowing. Those three Earth Days, year over year, indicate quite clearly that there are some issues in terms of how our climate is changing in Ontario and in fact in Canada.

It was very instructive to be there at Earth Day just the other day, and I was able to talk to some of the people who I mentioned in my previous remarks. I mentioned a number of people who are active on environmental issues in my community, because governments can do all they can in terms of legislation—like this bill and others that this government and previous governments have put forward—but when it comes down to doing the real work of ensuring that environmental issues get the kind of attention they deserve in our communities, it's absolutely the grassroots activists and the people who are active at the community level who make that happen.

I know the minister responsible for democratic renewal is aware of this as well. She's from my community and she has been at meetings, as I have, on the remedial action plan and the need to get some really serious work done around Hamilton harbour. On Saturday, at the Earth

Day festivities, I had an opportunity to actually talk to people who are active in the remedial action plan and in the Bay Area Restoration Council and who are partners in other organizations that also assist with the implementation of RAP.

The one person I forgot to mention in last week's debate on this bill was a gentleman named Larry Pomerantz. Larry is the person who actually pulls together our Earth Day celebrations in Hamilton every year. I first met Larry years ago when I was on city council and he was coming to talk to me about whether the city would partner with him on an Earth Day celebration. I couldn't understand what he was getting at because, if I'm not mistaken, he wanted to have that very first Earth Day celebration inside Copps Coliseum. I just didn't get it. I couldn't understand why you'd be celebrating Earth Day inside one of the largest physical facilities that exist in my community. It's kind of the antithesis of an Earth Day location, from my perspective. But nonetheless, Larry's done some great work over the years in our community and has had ever-successful Earth Days. The only thing that makes Earth Day a little bit less successful is when the weather is not conducive to families.

On Saturday, there were many, many families. Yes, there were adults, but there were so many kids. I have to say it's very encouraging to see so many children out on Earth Day participating in the planting of trees and trying to bring back the habitat at Princess Point. That's why Earth Day takes place at Princess Point. It's an area that has, over hundreds of years, deteriorated as a natural area. The habitat that used to support so many fish, plant, animal and bird species has all but been destroyed over the years. So a big part of what Earth Day is in Hamilton is to try to regenerate that habitat as it was before it was ruined by human hands over the years.

If you ever want a lesson on how the degradation of an ecosystem leads to the loss of species, you simply need to go on to the computer and look up anything from Princess Point or the remedial action plan or the Bay Area Restoration Council. Any of those organizations will take you to links to this particular habitat regeneration effort that's happening in my own community.

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In fact, another part of it is a fishway, where they're trying to keep the carp from spawning through the Desjardins Canal and into the waters of the Princess Point area, because carp are an invasive species, and invasive species of fish, through the eating of the weeds and vegetation inside the water, are preventing the native species from proliferating in that area. So there's an entire system set up to prevent those carp from coming over, and it's an amazing process. Again, if people are in the Hamilton area in the springtime, I encourage you to go down and look at the fishway and be amazed by the wonderful work they're doing to try to make sure that the fish habitat is restored so that the native species that used to live there are able to once again become abundant in those waters.

The other thing that I raised last week—and it's interesting, because of the people who had raised that issue—was the environmentally sensitive area in Stoney Creek, a part of my city, where there is a threat of development occurring simply because of a lack of appropriate notice being given to a particular landowner, which happens to be the separate school board in the city of Hamilton. Interestingly enough, under the previous council that was in place before this last election, the school board somehow was not in receipt of a notice of zoning of lands and, unfortunately, as a result, successfully appealed the existence of this environmentally sensitive area. What that means is that there is a particular area called the turtle ponds that is being threatened. That habitat is an area that the blue spotted salamander happens to inhabit, and the people from that area, from those communities surrounding that area, have been very active in trying to convince the school board and the city of Hamilton not to allow development on that environmentally sensitive area.

I've got to tell you, it's kind of frustrating to sit at this level and watch various pieces of legislation come forward that purport to do all these things, whether it's greenbelt or water protection or endangered species. On the ground, we still seem to be losing a heck of a lot of important areas in our communities. Again, the turtle ponds is one that was brought to light last week in our local newspaper. The activists around the turtle pond issue were at Earth Day as well, trying to get support for their cause, and I had the opportunity to speak to a number of the people involved in that effort. All I can say is pretty much what I said when I first began my speech, which is that it's really these people on the ground who are making the effort to make a difference in terms of bringing some of these initiatives the government has put in place into the light of day and actually have them occur, have them breathe life, if you will, in communities across the province. My community certainly has been blessed with so many activists.

In fact, just on the weekend, on Earth Day, I met the new executive director—relatively new—of the Bay Area Restoration Council, a gentleman named Jim Hudson. Jim and I have made a commitment to sit down and have a talk, because I was very active and well-versed with the previous executive director. I haven't had a chance to sit down and talk to Jim lately, but I certainly will be doing that in the future, because he plays a key role in harnessing the volunteerism of a number of people in our community who work on the remedial action plan and other initiatives in Hamilton.

The issues before us in Bill 184 are sound ones in terms of the desire to protect various kinds of species. If you look on the Environment Canada website to find out exactly what it means when we talk about species at risk, the Environment Canada website indicates a number of categories of risk:

- extinct, which is a species that no longer exists;
- extirpated, which is a species no longer existing in the wild in Canada but occurring elsewhere;

- endangered, which is a species facing imminent extirpation or extinction;
- threatened, which is a species likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed;
- species of special concern, which are particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events but not yet an endangered or threatened species;
- species that are data deficient; in other words, there isn't enough information about them; and
- species that are not at risk.

The interesting thing, as you go through the lists of endangered species, is the sheer numbers of them. I've got to tell you that many of the endangered species in Canada, in fact, are endangered in Ontario. In Canada, more than 500 wild animal and plant species are considered at risk, according to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, and nearly 40% of the Canadian species at risk are right here in Ontario, so it goes without saying that the import of this kind of legislation is absolutely unquestionable.

The issue has been raised by my own leader and others in my caucus of concern particularly around the consultation process, or lack thereof, and I know my colleague from the north will be talking about that a little bit later on. The member for Nickel Belt is very well aware of some of the concerns that some of the northern communities have, particularly around consultation. Again, I don't think it's the case that people are absolutely resistant to this legislation, which hasn't been updated since 1971, being updated; I don't think that's the issue. I think the issue is that there needs to be considerable and thoughtful consultation with stakeholders, and that means stakeholders across the board. I know that First Nations particularly have some concerns about the lack of consultation, consultation that's absolutely legally required for the government to undertake. So there are some serious issues there.

Coming from the community that I come from, I think it's high time we started to look at more effective control over the loss of our species of various types in the province of Ontario. That means everything from fish and birds and plants and—oh, here's a list: vascular plants, mosses, liverworts, hornworts, lichens, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, fishes, molluscs, crustaceans, insects—the various kinds of species under which a number of different animals and plants can be categorized.

There is no doubt that there needs to be an improvement of the legislation, but there is also no doubt that in order to get it right after so many years of there being no changes, it's really incumbent upon the government to do a proper and appropriate consultation and not to rush the bill through simply because they're trying to throw a bunch of stuff against the wall to see if it's going to stick, in terms of getting their opinion polls up. That's simply an unfair way to treat such an important matter in terms of the future of the province and in terms of the legacy that we leave behind to our children and our grandchildren. I know that members have spoken about that as well in some of the previous debates on this very bill,

that they see this as really a stewardship issue that is the responsibility of all of us, and I don't think there's a single member in this House who would disagree that that's definitely the case.

Not only does there need to be open and transparent and diligent consultation on this bill, but in fact the government needs to recognize that the way the bill is currently written, as many members have raised as well, there are significant—I don't know if you want to call them loopholes, but there are certainly significant opportunities for things to slip through in terms of not actually being done to properly protect species that are endangered.

The reality, again, is that even though they say that they have consulted extensively, it has only really been about 10 months, and it has not been within the process of this very place, where we have committee hearings and public hearings, where we can see stakeholders coming from all areas of the province to have their input. So that kind of consultation in terms of the committee process has not taken place.

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Also, it's really clear that the bill itself provides opportunities for the minister to delay the designation of species as being endangered. The process is one that does require some milestones to be put in place, but the bottom line is, at the end of the day, there are significant loopholes that could cause problems if we really do intend to protect endangered species from further erosion.

There has been some positive response and some positive feedback in terms of the arm's-length scientific panel that's being put in place by the government to review and determine where there is a need to become involved in species protection. But notwithstanding the fact that the government has claimed that a 10-month informal consultation process is enough, the reality is that the bill before us doesn't even allow for royal assent until 2008. What does that mean? How can it be that you're in such a hurry to get this bill through and you're beating your breast, saying, "This is so important to us"? You waited till the last minute to bring it forward. You're saying that it's something you really want to do, yet, in the bill itself, it doesn't receive royal assent until 2008. It makes a person wonder if really the game here isn't to get you through yet another election so you can hold this bill over the head of environmentalists and say, "You'd better support us, because if you don't support us and we don't form the government, then it's not going to receive royal assent in 2008." I certainly hope that's not the game the government is playing, because that's a pretty nasty game. It's pretty inappropriate on issues of such great import to the province of Ontario and to our current generations and generations in the future, to actually hold something over their heads as a bit of a threat by putting in a proclamation date for the bill that's a year after the election takes place.

I have not seen another bill of that type with that kind of a long due date in terms of royal assent. It brings me

some concern. It makes me think that the government really is being a little bit too cute by half in terms of the procedures they're putting in place; on the one hand, complaining that it's taking so long and they've got to invoke closure, saying they've consulted like crazy when in fact the reality shows they haven't. Then if you look at the fine print at the beginning of the bill, oh, guess what? "We're not even going to get this made into law until well after the next election, so you environmentalists had better behave." It's kind of like some of the funding issues we've been raising in question period around the kinds of things the government might be holding over the heads of various groups in terms of making sure that they can get the votes when it comes to election day on October 10 in the province of Ontario.

It's something that really makes people shake their heads with disdain, when they see their governments behaving in that way. It's certainly not dignified; it's certainly not democratic; and it's certainly not reflective of the kind of governments that people are yearning for in the province of Ontario and in our country. I just advise the government that these cute little manipulations, if you want to call them that, don't go without notice and don't do much to raise the esteem of the government in the eyes of the people—certainly not people like me; certainly not people like my colleagues. I would warn them that others as well in the community sometimes actually watch these debates unfolding in the Legislature and they do hear the kinds of criticisms we bring. It's not all something that the government can simply think that people are not paying attention to, that it's the fine print nobody really notices, and, "If we go out there and talk about endangered species, then everybody's going to be on board and we're going to be popular again." You know what? I say "good luck" to the government. I don't think it's a strategy that's working. It's interesting to watch how many bills they're bringing forward at the 11th hour as opposed to doing what was supposed to be done, which was bring some of this legislation a lot earlier so it could have had the appropriate time, scrutiny and effort made in terms of the debate and in terms of the critical analysis.

Really, I think that everybody in this place does support this kind of legislation. But we shake our heads with concern and with curiosity as to why the government would not have brought it earlier. If it was so darn important, why wait until the 11th hour, until the dying days of their mandate, to bring this kind of legislation in?

I know that my colleague from Nickel Belt wants to talk about this legislation as well, so I'm going to sit and have myself a glass of water as my voice starts to get a little bit dry. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): Immediately, I'd like to provide the member from Hamilton East with the answer to her concern about the delay in the bill getting royal assent. We have 70 species that are backlogged right now that need to get their recovery plans in place. We've committed to do that work before we

implement this new bill. Our commitment is to get the 70 outstanding species into the recovery stage and get that work done. We've put the resources into the ministry to get that done. We need that breathing space before we tackle the new regime that comes with this act. So that's why we're doing that.

I'm pleased to be able to stand here tonight and speak again about our Endangered Species Act. We introduced this bill on March 20. We put second reading forward on March 28. If passed, it would make Ontario a North American leader in species-at-risk protection and recovery. Essentially, all parties have agreed that, if passed, this legislation would represent a milestone in the protection and recovery of Ontario's species at risk and establish a benchmark for North America. It is also generally agreed that by expanding protection for our province's species and their habitats, the new act would help ensure that future generations of Ontarians enjoy the benefits of a healthy, abundant and biologically diverse natural environment.

If passed by the Legislature, the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, would broaden the scope of Ontario's existing Endangered Species Act, strengthen protection and recovery measures, and provide more flexibility for implementation. It would provide greater accountability to the public and demonstrate clear results. It would also encourage greater stewardship involvement from landowners, resource users and conservation organizations. The McGuinty government has proposed to back up this approach with funding of \$18 million over four years to promote stewardship activities protecting essential habitat and green space. This is separate from funds to support the implementation of the act.

There has been much discussion in the House about consultation. We are grateful for the significant input we have already received from stakeholders and aboriginal communities. We are continuing to work closely with groups and individuals to discuss common ground and approaches to implement the proposed legislation that will address the needs of a range of stakeholders, interest groups and landowners.

We began the consultation process in May 2006, when we launched a review of the existing Endangered Species Act. Over the past year, we have consulted widely with key resource users, landowners and conservation organizations. We have met with organizations representing agricultural interests more than a dozen times since last June. We have met with representatives from mining and aggregates more than 10 times. Ten meetings were held with aboriginal communities across the province last fall, and another three this month. We have also met with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The public was consulted through face-to-face meetings, newspaper ads, a discussion paper, an online questionnaire, and through three Environmental Bill of Rights registry postings. Our EBR postings have generated thousands of responses from interested stakeholders and individuals. In our most recent EBR posting, which just closed last Thursday, we received over 280 individual comments, 1,200 faxes and

800 e-mails. Included in this response were individual submissions from our key stakeholders. We are carefully evaluating and considering each response as we move forward.

These meetings are still happening. Just last week we held round-table discussions in Windsor, Kingston and Thunder Bay. All comments received at meetings, from the EBR postings and written submissions were considered in the drafting of this legislation. The proposed bill incorporates lessons learned from other jurisdictions, including the experience that the federal government has had implementing the Species at Risk Act. Bill 184 includes provisions to facilitate harmonization between the Ontario and federal governments to meet the needs of species-at-risk protection and recovery. Consultation will continue, and it is an important component of our program and policy development. Bill 184 may be referred to committee, and if that is the will of the Legislature, there will be additional opportunities for input through the public hearings process. I am also committed to establishing an advisory committee, enabled by Bill 184, that would include a cross-section of stakeholders and provide invaluable advice on all facets of implementation.

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In preparing the proposed legislation, MNR conducted a separate aboriginal consultation. We believe that the proposed legislation is unique in Canada for its inclusion of specific provisions to accommodate aboriginal interests. The ministry's aboriginal consultation included:

- an individual letter and copy of the discussion paper mailed to approximately 150 aboriginal communities across Ontario in May of last year;

- meetings held with key individuals within aboriginal communities who have involvement or experience in species at risk to gain information related to the intersection of aboriginal interests with proposed species-at-risk legislation and its subsequent implementation;

- a series of workshops held in October and November 2006 across the province, strategically located to maximize opportunities for attendance by aboriginal organizations and communities, and subsequent follow-up discussions were arranged based on information received through the above consultation approaches.

Three additional meetings have taken place over the past week to continue our ongoing discussion with aboriginal peoples.

MNR will continue to provide feedback to aboriginal interests on the proposed legislation and will involve them in its implementation. The "purposes" section highlights aboriginal traditional knowledge as one of the key components in assessing species at risk by the species assessment body, which is the committee on the status of species at risk in Ontario, commonly known as COS-SARO. Individuals with aboriginal traditional knowledge will be eligible for appointment to COSSARO. COS-SARO species classification is based on best available scientific information, including aboriginal traditional knowledge. A non-derogation clause is included regard-

ing existing aboriginal and treaty rights. The proposed legislation makes it clear that it does not abrogate or derogate the protection provided for the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada as recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

We also welcome input on ways in which aboriginal interests can continue to be addressed. The government is committed to meeting its constitutional obligations in respect to aboriginal peoples. It is important to note that the meetings held with aboriginal communities to discuss Bill 184 and ways to involve and address aboriginal interests are being well received. Aboriginal consultation will continue as we proceed to develop implementation approaches and stewardship programs.

There has been some discussion in the House about the funding commitments in the provincial budget for the Ministry of Natural Resources this year versus previous years. I am very glad my official opposition critic is here tonight, as he always is, and very eager to learn more. I'm pleased to provide him with this information. There have been claims that MNR's budget has been reduced by an unseemly sum of \$36 million. I have to assure the member here tonight and the people of Ontario that that is certainly not the case. The \$36-million reduction referred to is part of a one-time allocation for extra money received by MNR last year to deal with a higher-than-normal forest firefighting season. I think the member understands that. In fact, the ministry's 2007 budget will increase by more than 6%, to \$726 million, from the 2006 Ontario budget expense of \$682 million. Part of this additional funding for MNR will go directly towards implementing the programs outlined in Bill 184.

Our approach to better protection and recovery of species at risk in Ontario includes not only the legislation but the development of strong programs and stewardship opportunities. We know that broader legislation on its own is not enough to achieve our goals, and we also know that the public and stakeholders unanimously support proactive stewardship and incentive approaches. Because many species that need protection are found on private land, voluntary stewardship activities are essential to achieving any kind of success in reversing the rate of species in decline that is now happening in Ontario.

Bill 184 is proposing a "stewardship first" approach, a key recommendation of many of the land users, to help landowners do the right thing. This program will provide on-the-ground support to landowners, aboriginal groups and stakeholders to provide the tools and incentives they need to help do the right things for species at risk. The program will be guided by a number of principles, including building on existing stewardship agents and funds, voluntary participation, province-wide availability, and accountability and transparency.

Examples of activities that could be supported through this program include: support to farmers and landowners for the creation and maintenance of species-at-risk habitat on their properties; support for the forestry, urban development and other industries through funding of

research projects that identify ways of integrating protection and recovery into their business; outreach and education projects that provide information on species at risk to the public and provide opportunities for youth employment; the purchase of key species-at-risk habitat from willing sellers.

We also recognize that flexibility is needed regarding certain activities, particularly when the outcome is beneficial to the species or where significant socio-economic interests for the province are involved. Bill 184 contains provisions for stewardship agreements that are not provided for in the current act. These agreements could support the agricultural sector in their stewardship efforts and ensure that they do not face future restrictions as a result.

Many species at risk in southern Ontario are found in areas that are already natural or naturalized. It is very rare for active agricultural croplands to be considered species-at-risk habitat. Where species at risk are found on working agricultural lands, we will work with the agricultural community to develop long-term stewardship and best management practices that, where possible, facilitate continued agricultural activities and protection for species at risk.

Activities that might benefit the agricultural community that could be supported through the stewardship program include: topping up environmental cost-share programs available to farmers for the creation and maintenance of species-at-risk habitat; funding research projects to identify ways of integrating species-at-risk protection and recovery into agricultural practices; the development and implementation of recovery plans for species at risk which enable a wide variety of stakeholders, including farmers, to get engaged in recovery planning; and the securement of high-priority species-at-risk habitat, including opportunities for purchase, lease and easement of properties in co-operation with land-owners and existing partnerships.

We are also very aware of the significant interest in the role of forest management activities related to species at risk, as well as their protection and recovery. This government has made a significant investment to ensure the vitality of the forest industry and northern communities in this province. We have and continue to demonstrate our commitment to the forest industry. The forest industry is already addressing many species at risk through the forest management planning process. Approaches for addressing other species at risk are currently being developed through landscape guides. The forest management planning process provides a good vehicle for dealing with species at risk. The proposed legislation complements forest management planning activities and provides opportunities to integrate species and habitat protection more effectively.

Our objective is to address species at risk through existing processes to the maximum extent possible. We are continuing discussions with the forest industry to develop effective means of implementation. Agreements and permits will provide flexibility that does not current-

ly exist under the present act, which will allow industry to strengthen its position with consumers and investors alike. In addition, the forestry and forest products sectors will be provided with a range of stewardship incentives to ensure continued engagement in the species-at-risk protection and recovery actions.

As I said earlier, I don't believe there is any disagreement in the House that the people of Ontario deserve the benefits that come from conserving our province's unique natural heritage and rich biodiversity. I believe we have succeeded in developing progressive, precedent-setting legislation that would offer optimum protection for Ontario's species at risk while at the same time support the overall social and economic well-being of our citizens.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I am very pleased tonight to be able to debate time allocation of Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts. I think what is disappointing is that, generally speaking—a lot of members of this assembly certainly support species at risk and the protection of any of our species—is the whole fact that in this era of democratic renewal, when we thought we were maybe doing some reform to this House, we would be time-allocating everything.

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At a home show on Sunday, I talked to a group of people from the citizens' assembly up in Simcoe North. I mentioned to them that in spite of the fact that they're talking about democratic renewal, we've actually time-allocated the democratic reform bill. And here we are again tonight. I've just learned that we're now time-allocating the water-taking bill.

So you wonder, what's the rush here? Why are we in such a panic to time-allocate everything? The House can sit until the end of June; we can certainly do committee hearings. There are a bunch of words that I think we need to get involved with here, and I think we could start using some "gate" phrases. For example, Caplangate, slush-gate, Colleggate, broken-promises-gate, autism-gate, Bill 140-gate—it goes on and on and on.

You guys want out of the House; that's the only problem. That's why we're not travelling this bill to Thunder Bay or to Sudbury. The minister just mentioned all of the wonderful consultations he had done, but you know what? No committee of this Legislature has done it. He talked about meeting with the aboriginals and meeting with the timber industry etc. Give me a break. That's what everybody is saying: Why can we not travel this bill? What's the rush? What are you trying to hide? What are we trying to hide in this House that we cannot take this bill on committee hearings? You waste more money in any given hour on props than it would take to go to Thunder Bay or Sudbury and actually listen to the folks in those communities. People want to hear that. They want the opportunity to say that a legislative committee went to those communities. It's not going to happen. We've time-allocated it. We're down to a couple of mornings in this House now. That's what has happened.

The reality is, they want out of the House. They're going to try to get out of here by the May 24 weekend.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: Absolutely, that's what you want. You know it.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Then travel the bill. If you don't want out of this House early, then travel this bill. Why are we time-allocating this bill? What is the rush? You've been the whole term in getting it to the House, the same as with the water-taking bill. I can tell you right now, on the water-taking bill, there are a number of people, including the Georgian Bay Association, who want an opportunity. They've called me. They want an opportunity to debate that bill in committee hearings. They're told that it's not going to happen; they're not going to get an opportunity. So you know what? We heard Mr. Colle today, and he didn't answer one question; the Minister of Citizenship didn't answer one question to do with slushgate. He talked around it. I can tell you that when we're talking about an era of democratic renewal and the cabinet of Ontario is going to put a question on the ballot talking about democratic renewal, it's a sad day when we're time-allocating every bill leading up to that decision.

The minister talks about all the new money in MNR. Maybe there is a lot of additional funding that's gone in; I don't know. But I can tell you one thing. Have you ever gone to the Midhurst office of MNR? It's a beautiful building down beside the county council chambers, next door to the education centre. You walk in this dingy hole in this beautiful building, you pick up this old phone and try to find somebody in the building who can come out of secret hiding. They'll tell you, if you get the right number, that they'll come down and meet you. There used to actually be somebody at the door to talk to you. They'd say, "I'll call your office," or "I'll get you this information." People are complaining to me about this all the time. I hear it over and over again. Talk about the fine service of MNR, and you know what? There's no money.

Let's talk for a second about all this money that's floating around in MNR and what it's going to do for species at risk. Let's talk about Lake Simcoe, and the fact that the whitefish are now basically destroyed; they have to restock the whitefish. Now we're finding that the herring are leaving Lake Simcoe. Do you know what it's going to cost to rehabilitate that lake? I don't know if anybody realizes: \$163 million. If they put in about \$100,000 a year, by the year 3000 we might have one fish or something restored to the lake. It'll never happen. And you know what? Aquatic mammals or fish are included in the species at risk. So I can't imagine how it will ever happen. At \$18 million over four years, it's not going to happen.

We all want to save the species, but let's be upfront about this. Let's not hide behind some secret proposal or secret program. We need to put real money into these programs, we need to put real money into the Ministry of Natural Resources, and we need to do a proper job in

making sure that the species are in fact protected, not hide behind something.

The former Minister of Natural Resources, the member for Oshawa, who spoke very eloquently on this bill, obviously knows a lot about all the different species across the province. He mentioned to me that the Ministry of Natural Resources conservation officers don't have enough money for gas for their vehicles. Last year, we know they shut them off for the summer.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): They sold cookies.

Mr. Dunlop: They had bake sales, and they sold little flags and things like that. They'd go to the fall fairs, and they'd sell balloons or something like that to find gas for the conservation officers' equipment. It's pretty pathetic. Although we're trying to protect the species, we don't have money for the conservation officers to go out and actually protect them.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: I hear the minister responsible for democratic renewal now heckling me. You know what? On a closure motion, I wouldn't talk too loud, Minister, because people have caught on to this democratic renewal process—nothing but a joke.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: The Minister of Labour is over there heckling me again. I'd be more worried about Green Lane. The minister had better go down to Green Lane. Start knocking on doors now, because you're going to need every vote you can possibly get. Green Lane is going to destroy five seats down there, and you know it.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: If he's not worried about Green Lane, why is he over there screaming at me?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Dunlop: He's now claiming we closed 71 MNR offices. Name two of them. You couldn't name two if you tried hard. You couldn't name them. Fine, get on the BlackBerry; find some spin doctor. Maybe Warren Kinsella can help you find a name. Maybe it was some office in Manitoba or Prince Edward Island.

The fact of the matter is, we're time-allocating a bill that the citizens of the province of Ontario want an opportunity to debate. They want to debate it in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury or North Bay. What is the problem? That's what this is all about. We just want an opportunity for committee hearings. No one is screaming loud about this. We just want that opportunity.

I brought this up last week. Environmental Defence had their lobby evening, and I thought it was a brilliant idea that they came up with the playing cards—and they had all kinds of members from all different political parties in the reception—and actually showed us a number of the plants and birds and fish and animals that would possibly be extinct in this province if we didn't do something about it. I know that Ontario Nature is behind them. They're supporting it as well, and most of the members of this House do.

The reality is that I just cannot understand what the rush is to time-allocate this bill, that we cannot take a committee of eight people to Sudbury or Thunder Bay or Sault Ste. Marie or maybe North Bay, wherever it may be in the north, to let the people have an opportunity to have a—there's a major impact on those people.

The minister, a few minutes ago, mentioned how wonderful it was with agriculture. I've got this huge press release saying that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is not happy at all with it. I thought they met with them seven times. I guess it was seven times they said no, and now they're disappointed in it. So we're going to time-allocate it so no one has to go on the defence.

The reality is, as I said earlier, it's all about slushgate, Caplango and Lottogate, all these different things. They want out of this House badly. It was pathetic to hear the answers today. It was one of the most pathetic days I've seen in this House, watching these individuals actually trying to answer a question, not being straightforward with the people of the province. It was disappointing, as a politician, to think that in this era of democratic renewal, we have to put up with this garbage. It was pathetic. I'm disappointed in the ministers that we've had to create things like slushgate—we have to run and hide to get out of this area.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: I know there are lots of people heckling and they're not agreeing with what I'm saying, but I see it in MNR. I see the cuts to places like Midhurst, and I see that the conservation officers have no money for gasoline in their boats and vehicles. It's very, very disappointing.

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Maybe there will be all kinds of money flowing around. Who knows? But the reality is that as we speak right now, there's a shortage of money in the MNR. There's certainly not enough money in the MNR budget to protect the species at risk; that's a fact. If you think that \$4 million a year is going to compensate for all the costs associated with the implementation of this bill, it's not going to happen. It's very disappointing for members of this House who want to support this bill. I'm one person who wants to support this bill. I know that not everyone in my caucus may feel exactly the same way as I do, but the reality is, I really believe strongly in the fact that we need to protect as many species as we can, and at the same time, try to compensate the proper landowners for issues that they face and that type of thing. That's the only way I think we can move forward with it in this era.

I've had an opportunity to say a few words. I just want to sum up by saying that I wish they would reconsider it once again, but it looks like it's not going to happen because, as I said earlier, we just found out about the water-taking bill—it's been time-allocated. I don't know. I guess every bill is going to be time-allocated from here on in. We'll likely be out of here in two weeks the way it's going. I mean, I thought we were sitting here to mid-June or late June.

Interjection: They used to complain about time allocation.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes, they used to complain a lot about time allocation if anybody did it the odd time. But now we're doing every bill on time allocation, because the reality is—

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Sixty-one per cent of your bills were time-allocated.

Mr. Dunlop: Well, 100% of your bills are being time-allocated. It's 100% of your bills, so you have to answer to these questions.

But, do you know what? You're giving us a lot of ammunition because with slushgate and Lottogate and all these scandals that we seem to be running into, it's starting to make Chuck Guité and the boys look not too bad.

I keep going back to old Chrétien with that golf ball, making fun of Gomery. And this is coming to be what we're seeing in this House, as they're trying to answer to the people of Ontario on some of the questions. We just want to know: Why have we increased spending in this province by \$23 billion in four years when we're not seeing results? We've got conservation officers without gas. We've got secret slush funds. Basically, in my opinion, what has happened in some of these ministries is almost scandalous.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak tonight. I know my other colleagues want to say a few words as well. But I wish the government would, one more time, reconsider the whole intent of time-allocating this bill. Make the people of Ontario proud. Let's put this bill to committee hearings properly in northern Ontario, where they deserve that opportunity. Let the farmers and the agricultural community have one more crack at this. Let's pass this bill with dignity and respect, and we can carry those types of results into a democratic renewal vote in the fall.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'd like to say that it's a pleasure to participate in the debate, but it's not, because we're dealing with a time allocation motion, which is designed to grab members by the throat and choke off their debate and choke off any opportunity that we might have to represent some views from our constituents or from folks who live in our part of the world; in my case specifically, some aboriginal communities, and I'll speak a little bit later to that.

If you look at the time allocation motion that the government is forcing down our throats this evening, you will very clearly see that this is all about ensuring that the committee process is going to be as truncated as possible and the government is going to do whatever it can to limit the number of people who can come and have their say on this particular bill. I can tell you that a lot of First Nations would want the opportunity to come and do that, and they're not going to get a chance to do that. Frankly, I think the bill should be travelling and the government should go to some of those First Nations communities.

Those who live above the 50th parallel are the ones who will be most affected by the passage of this bill, so it might be a good idea for the committee to actually hear from those folks. Of course, they're not going to have that opportunity, because you can bet your boots this committee is only sitting here in Toronto and it's sitting for a limited period of time and there's going to be a limited number of presenters who ever get to have any say.

Then you look at the opportunity to put amendments, and it's very clear that on the single day that amendments are going to be dealt with, by 5 o'clock, regardless of how many amendments are left to deal with, that's going to be it, that's going to be all. Five o'clock: Anything left over that should have been moved, should be dealt with, should be debated, is going to be deemed to have been moved, is going to be deemed to have been debated, and that's going to be the end of that process too. So in the time allocation motion it's also very clear that the government is not very interested in any amendments, because if they were, they wouldn't be here with a motion that's designed to cut off that process very rapidly at 5 o'clock on the afternoon of May 9.

Then if you look at the next section of the motion, which talks about what's going to happen on third reading, again you've got the government choking off that debate very quickly: one afternoon scheduled for the debate on third reading. At that particular time, the time available is going to be divided up between the members of all the parties. It might happen in an afternoon or it might happen in an evening sitting; regardless, in one of those sittings and only one, there's going to be a little bit of debate on third reading, and at the end of that, the vote will be called, and that will be the end of that process too.

So here we are with a motion that is designed in every way, shape and form to make sure that people can't come and have their say, that presentations can't be made in terms of dealing with some very different sides to this issue that are out there, to make very clear that there aren't going to be a whole lot of amendments put or debated or allowed, except for whatever government amendments might come through, because they're going to be deemed to have passed—and of course, with their majority, they are—and barely anything on third reading, because really the government doesn't want to hear what any of us have to say with respect to what our constituents are telling us about this particular bill.

It's a little hard to take from a government that talked about democratic renewal. It's a bit ironic that the very bill that talked about changes around democratic renewal was also time-allocated. Now we find out—and I didn't know till my colleague from the Conservative Party spoke just before me—that another time allocation motion has been filed for tomorrow for the water-taking bill. So here we go. I guess this is going to be the order of the day from here on in for however long we sit.

I resent that, because with this particular issue, the government had lots of time to bring forward a new bill. If it was such a priority for the government, where have

they been? We are in the fourth year of this Liberal mandate, with about five months to go before the election, and suddenly this is a big rush, rush, get this through: "If you don't support it, you don't care about endangered species, blah, blah, blah." You've got to say, "Look, folks, if it was a priority, where have you been?"

That takes me to the minister's comments about royal assent. I find it very curious that it's such a big rush and it's so important and we've got to do something about endangered species and "Get on board, because if you're not, you're against endangered species." And lo and behold, royal assent for the bill is not even going to take place until June 2008. So what kind of rush is that?

Now, here's the response the minister gives, here's the rationale. Listen to this. The minister says, "We can't do it before then because we have 70 species at risk where we haven't done species management plans or species recovery plans." Seventy: That should tell you how low a priority endangered species are with this government. If today, as we stand here and debate this, the government has no less than 70 species that have already been identified as at risk and you've done zero, zip, nada to put any money on the table to actually deal with the recovery plan for those 70, does this sound like a priority to you? It doesn't to me. That's a really lame rationale. Frankly, it gives an even blacker eye to the government to stand here today and admit that we have to hold off on royal assent for a year because we haven't done anything about the 70 species at risk that have already been identified and we've got to deal with them first before we can even look at new ones. What kind of priority is that? Zero. No priority. That's the reality.

If endangered species had been a priority with this government, then this government would have been putting money on the table to deal with those 70 species that have already been identified and would have put that money on the table to make sure recovery plans were in place to deal with those species. I wonder how many more of them have been lost because the government hasn't done anything about dealing with the backlog of the 70 species that already have been identified.

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So that excuse about royal assent is pathetic. It gives the government an even blacker eye. It clearly shows that endangered species haven't been a priority with this government and are only becoming a priority for them for political purposes, because we are in the fourth term of this government, within five months of an election, and this government has got to go forward and try and show somebody that they have done something about endangered species before we hit the next election. But it hasn't been a priority. The mere fact that we have 70 species at risk today without recovery plans, that that has been the case under the Liberal government for the last four years, says it all in terms of how little a priority endangered species have been for this government.

This is all a public relations exercise, regrettably, on an issue that is very important, that I consider to be very important. It's a public relations exercise on the eve of an

election, because so very little has been done by this government to date to deal with the species that have already been identified as at risk.

I also heard the minister say, "Oh my goodness, we're going to propose some new money so we can deal with these species recovery plans." Holy jeez, who believes this? Who believes any more that the Ministry of Natural Resources is going to get some new money, additional money, to deal with these 70 recovery plans that they've already got to do and then the new ones they want to add some time after royal assent, some time after June 2008? The Ministry of Natural Resources staff in North Bay about two months ago held a bake sale just to raise money for gas for the conservation officers. The MNR staff themselves held a bake sale. Doesn't that tell you a little bit about how sad the situation is at the Ministry of Natural Resources right now in terms of funding for conservation officers, the very people we trust out there to be looking after the protection of fish and wildlife? There was a public meeting less than a month ago in my own community of Sudbury hosted by a number of people who are avid fishers and hunters because they are so concerned that in Sudbury it's the same thing: no gas for any vehicles for conservation officers to be out there in the bush protecting our fish and our wildlife.

I find it so hard to believe that magically, with the passage of this bill, MNR is going to get some new money to deal with recovery plans. I'm sorry, that has not been the track record for this ministry over the last four years. On the contrary, the funding crisis at MNR has gotten worse and worse and worse. I find it hard to believe that magically there's going to be some money available to deal with this particular legislation. In fact, things are so bad that MNR staff in my own riding actually did their own petition about underfunding of the Ministry of Natural Resources and had me read into it the record, and of course I supported it. It was MNR staff in the Sudbury district that put together the petition. They of course signed it, friends and neighbours signed it, and they sent it to me to point out how bad the situation now is in terms of funding.

So if anyone believes for half a moment that something is just going to change that dramatically and that MNR is going to get some money to make this work, I don't know what world they're living in, because that has not been the track record or the legacy or the history of what has happened in this ministry under the McGuinty Liberals.

I heard the minister read into the record the consultation with aboriginal communities. I want to focus on this, because the reality is that the group of folks who will be most affected by whatever happens around this legislation are aboriginal people who live north of the 50th parallel. They are the ones who live closest to the land. They are the ones who, in terms of trying to maintain a traditional way of life, continue to hunt and fish and rely on and live off the land. They will be the ones who will be most impacted by this bill, and I hope that most people in this Legislature recognize that. So it

seems to me that over and above the government's constitutional obligations to consult, there is an added responsibility to consult because these First Nations are the ones who will be most affected. The minister says, "There was all kinds of consultation. My goodness, we were talking to this community and that community and this aboriginal group and that aboriginal group, tribal councils and the whole nine yards"—except that I've got some correspondence here from a number of First Nations north of 50, and what they're telling me is absolutely categorically different than what the minister tried to put on the table here tonight. So let me read some of them into the record.

This comes from the Wapekeka First Nation: "Mr. David Ramsay, the Minister of Natural Resources and minister responsible for aboriginal affairs, has been requested by our community leadership to meet our First Nation with respect to on-going disturbing matters stemming from the designation of the Waterway Provincial Park in our territory." He continues to refuse to meet. "The chief and council cannot understand Mr. Ramsay's procedures by not consulting with our First Nation with respect to any bills which can affect our traditional territory.

"Similarly, as [with] any bill the province wants to put in the form of legislation, there has never been any kind of community consultation process. Legally, our First Nation believes that we are not part of it to begin with and we will never be part of it until we have been properly consulted and until our First Nation can agree to support any proposed bill....

"Finally, I want to reiterate that the province has not contacted our First Nation about Bill 184, which I believe will produce significant impact on our lands, plants, trees, fish, birds and animals. In my opinion, any legislation applicable within the laws and justice system in Ontario will eventually penalize our right to use our traditional lands and resources."

This is from Chief Norman Brown, Wapekeka First Nation, March 30, 2007.

Here is the next one, from the Chapleau Ojibwe First Nation. It reads as follows:

"Please be advised that the Chapleau Ojibwe First Nation (COFN) has not been consulted on this matter"—Bill 184—"due mainly to the fact that the consultation methodology fell far short of legal requirements. Two telephone discussions took place with Debbie Ramsey, manager of the Ontario Endangered Species Act legislative review with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources regarding the importance of this process and the concerns being expressed by COFN. A number of suggestions were made regarding how the methodology could be shifted on the fly as a means of meeting some of COFN's more important concerns, but there was no response from the province....

"As you know, the province of Ontario recently developed an internal duty-to-consult strategy that fell far short of its legal obligations. More recently, the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines developed

a discussion paper in support of developing an aboriginal consultation approach for mineral sector activities. The Nishnawbe Aski Nation, of which COFN is a member, has developed its own duty-to-consult strategy that the province doesn't seem interested in following. It is COFN's position that the above products greatly simplify the task of developing a duty-to-consult framework that meets everyone's needs. Unfortunately, COFN's request to the Chapleau district manager of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for a small amount of funding to sponsor a pilot project that would connect all of these pieces was turned down.

"Perpetuating the legal and political risk associated with the duty-to-consult issue continues to undermine economic stability in northern Ontario at a time when it is needed the most."

That's dated April 10, from the Chapleau Ojibwe First Nation—no consultation in any meaningful way at all between the government and this First Nation.

This one is from the Fort Severn First Nation, dated April 4, 2007. It says as follows: "This is to inform you that our First Nation has never been consulted during the formation of this bill, and to our knowledge, representatives from our tribal council ... are not aware of this legislation and have not been asked for input during its development." The tribal council at Fort Severn would probably include six or seven First Nations, not just Fort Severn.

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This is from the office of the grand chief, Stan Louttit, grand chief for Mushkegowuk Council out of Moose Factory. It says the following: "For your information, there has been no consultation on the subject matter." That's the grand chief for Mushkegowuk Council. I would think if the government was actually seriously interested in talking to the leadership of First Nations in northern Ontario, they would have talked to Grand Chief Stan Louttit. It's very clear—this letter is dated April 10—that there was no consultation. Maybe there has been now, but there certainly wasn't any in the 10 months when the minister says this legislation was developed, and there certainly wasn't any up to that point in time where the legislation was actually introduced.

Here's another one. This one is from the Whitewater Lake First Nation, which is in Thunder Bay. It says the following: "To date we have not heard about any consultations with Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) regarding Bill 184 and this issue never even came up during recent meetings we've had with them. If there were consultations going on, they"—the Ministry of Natural Resources—"had many opportunities to inform us and we also believe this bill could definitely impact First Nations in many areas. The only issue being discussed with MNR is about Ontario Parks and it is one that will be ongoing..." That was dated March 27, 2007, Chief Arlene Slipperjack of the Whitewater Lake First Nation.

Here's another one, dated April 2, 2007, from the chief and council of the Attawapiskat First Nation. It says

as follows: "The Ministry of Natural Resources did consult with our director of lands and resources on the proposed legislation several months ago, at one meeting. On our behalf, she invited MNR staff to come and talk to the community and elders about the rare species legislation but they"—MNR—"never accepted our" invitation. "This was quite a disappointment for us as we feel it is important to the MNR staff to understand the importance of woodland caribou to our people (woodland caribou being one of the species included in the proposed legislation)." That was dated April 2, 2007, signed by Chief Mike Carpenter, Attawapiskat First Nation.

Here's the final one I'm going to read into the record. This was dated April 3, 2007, from the Independent First Nations Alliance. It reads as follows:

"Independent First Nations Alliance has received no requests for consultation from Minister Ramsay on Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk. Normally, something of this magnitude would be faxed to our office. Additionally, nothing has been mentioned during the northern table discussions that we have attended.

"We are disturbed by the claim of 'exhaustive consultation conducted with many groups including First Nations' in the minister's introduction of the bill to the Legislature. Nothing has come through our office requesting consultation on legislation for species at risk at the provincial level.

"We would like to formally request that you ask the minister for a list of the 'many groups' he has consulted on the development of Bill 184."

That is signed by Gerry McKay, CEO of the Independent First Nations Alliance.

It would probably be interesting actually to put in an FOI and ask the Minister of Natural Resources for the list of the many aboriginal groups that he has consulted on the development of Bill 184, but I'll share with you this story: It's probably not going to get this group or us very far. I'll tell you why. On October 4, the Minister of Health, in introducing the long-term-care legislation, said to the media outside after he had introduced the bill that many groups who had talked to the government about long-term care said that no minimum standards of care were required in Ontario. On that very day, on hearing that outside, I put in a freedom-of-information request to the Ministry of Health asking for the list of those groups, those organizations, those individuals who actually told the Ministry of Health that no minimum standard of care was required for residents of long-term-care homes. Here we are today, April 23, and there's still no response from the Ministry of Health on the list of groups who allegedly told the government that no minimum standards of care were required. From October 4 to April 23, there has been zero in terms of a reply from the ministry regarding that very list that the minister talked about outside of the House.

Given that most recent experience, we could probably put in an FOI, but I'll bet we'll be stonewalled in the same way that I'm now being stonewalled with respect to this information from the Ministry of Health, not to

mention the three years of stonewalling that I have had to put up with from this government while just trying to get some information about the legal costs, taxpayers' money, that this government has squandered fighting the parents of autistic children in court—over three years now.

On the eve of when the government was supposed to release this information to me as a result of an order made by the privacy commissioner's office, did I get the information? No. On March 7, I got filed with a notice that the government is going to go to judicial review. I now have the pleasure of going to judicial review to defend my right to try to get this information, not only on behalf of those parents, but on behalf of all taxpayers, who should know why that is happening.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It's certainly a pleasure to be in the House this evening to take part in this time allocation motion on Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act. I would like to preface my comments this evening by reading from Ontario's biodiversity strategy of 2005.

"Ontarians are fortunate to live in a province that is home to an abundant variety of plants, animals, birds, fish and insects, as well as the forests, wetlands, lakes and rivers they inhabit. This broad network of biological species and systems—our biodiversity—enriches our lives and provides us with clean water and air, as well as sources of food, wood, medicines and energy.

"Conserving Ontario's biodiversity is key to achieving a healthy environment, strong communities and a thriving economy. It includes protecting the variety of ecosystems and plant and animal species in Ontario and using our natural resources sustainably for the benefit of Ontarians."

I read that because when you look at the situation today, with 176 animals and plants in Ontario determined to be at risk—10 extirpated, 76 endangered, 45 threatened and 45 of special concern—it is a necessity now—not later but now—to follow the 2005 report of Ontario's biodiversity strategy and to do what they recommended: "Review and update Ontario species-at-risk legislation to provide broader protection for species at risk and their habitats, and to include requirements for recovery planning, assessment, reporting and enforcement."

When I was given the opportunity to speak tonight, I thought back to what I did in the riding on Saturday. On Saturday, I was down at the Raisin Region Conservation Authority, taking part in Earth Day celebrations, where I met Norm Genier, the soil and water conservation specialist at that authority, and also Lisa Delandes, the fish and wildlife specialist, along with a team of Home Depot employees who came out to assist in handing out trees, educating the public on how to plant those trees, educating the public on soil, water, the air—all part of that tree. That's important. I also saw a whole selection of birdhouses. Certainly, Ms. Delandes was interested in people getting educated about how they could regenerate the eastern bluebird into our wildlife of eastern Ontario.

I remember, as a young lad on the farm back in the 1950s and early 1960s, where between our house and the barn on that farm we had a hydro pole, and on that hydro pole was a birdhouse. Every year, my father looked forward to seeing the eastern bluebird return. But you know, for whatever reason, the eastern blue bird disappeared on that property, and basically disappeared in eastern Ontario. Certainly it was with the formation, in 1988, of the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society that we saw a regeneration of the eastern bluebird.

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I'll never forget the Sunday morning about five years ago that I looked out from my bedroom window and here was an eastern bluebird scouting out a birdhouse that I had on my property. My daughters thought I was crazy, and my wife thought I was very crazy that I was making quite a scene about the eastern bluebird. I did that, for I remember those years on the farm, many years ago, back in the 1950s, when it was always the rite of spring for the bluebird to come back. And to stand in the House this evening and to say that this is not a popularity contest—this has nothing to do with popularity as was alluded to in this House tonight; it has to do with doing the right thing at the right time in a planned way. And I think that's exactly what we're doing.

A comment was made this evening that also got me kind of charged. We have in this bill planned a stewardship program for species at risk in Ontario. The minister alluded to that, talked about it. And, you know, I spent a little bit of time this afternoon thinking back to Lake St. Francis in my riding, a lake that was just teeming, for years and years, with yellow perch. We know that the yellow perch is on the decline in Lake St. Francis, and it has been attributed to the tributaries that flow into Lake St. Francis. The Raisin Region Conservation Authority did a plan: Lake St. Francis Tributary Restoration Project. In that project it's unbelievable, with a little bit of money, what has happened along the shoreline and out in the river, out in this lake, which is part of the St. Lawrence River system.

I think about the committee that was organized to make sure that the funds were distributed in the proper way to those who would make the greatest benefit from those funds: the conservation authority and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the St. Lawrence River Restoration Council, the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and the resource stewardship council of the SD&G. They were all involved. What did it do? It got 10,000 livestock out of water courses. It got alternate water sources on 56 farms. It upgraded 59 manure storage facilities, giving help, giving financial assistance to those people who wanted to do that. It allowed for the education of conservation tillage on over 10,000 acres of land and the planting of 260 native species of trees and shrubs. This is the kind of thing that will happen with this species at risk in Ontario stewardship program. It will provide the much-needed support and incentives for stewardship

activities by the landowners, resource users and conservation organizations.

I just look at the opportunities that we have here. I look at the opportunities that we have in our native communities too. In our native communities, the aboriginal communities and organizations have for centuries had a great interest in the plants and animals species, but some of those species are at risk, and we have to, sooner rather than later—and it's now—do something about that.

I know that we have been hearing in the House this evening that this is a big rush. This isn't a big rush. It's the time to do this, and it's the time to do it right. I think that's why the minister commented tonight about the number of organizations that have had opportunities to consult, to provide information. Certainly the ministry's website has had many hits and many, many responses, some hundreds of responses, with 80% supporting the recommendations of the Endangered Species Act review panel. We have the Sierra Club of Canada, the eastern chapter. We have the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, ROMA—Rural Ontario Municipalities Association. They've all had input into this, and that's what it's about, that they have an input.

I think it's time to move on. I'm delighted to have had an opportunity to speak on this bill, and I look forward to further debate this evening.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I appreciate the opportunity to address the issue of time allocation on Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act. I would say that this is certainly indicative of a pattern that's been emerging for some time—indeed, in my short time here in this Legislature.

The first time I witnessed it was on time allocation on Bill 107, which was the human rights reform legislation. It seems that every time things get a little bit too hot, every time it looks like things aren't going according to plan, it's time to pull the plug and cut off public debate. Certainly with the hearings on Bill 107, we saw that as we travelled last summer to Thunder Bay, Ottawa and London. We heard time after time from speakers that they wanted some fundamental changes to this legislation. When the hearings started again in the fall in Toronto, things were going no better. Even though the hearings were still being scheduled and still being advertised to the public, at that point the government decided to close the debate, pull the plug on debate and incurred over \$100,000 of taxpayers' money in cancelling the ads, too, I might add.

Next, we see time allocation on the budget bill—surely one of the most important bills to come before this Legislature, outlining the fiscal policy of this government. Again, time allocation on this bill which, to me, speaks volumes about this government's confidence in its own budget, that it would close the door to public scrutiny and debate. Next, we had time allocation on the bill that deals with electoral reform, democratic renewal and restoring the public's faith in the political process—ironic to say the very least.

Now we come to time allocation on Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act. There's another huge irony here, in that I was present in this Legislature about a week ago where the government members were waxing eloquent about their commitment to this process and how important it was to preserve endangered species and species at risk, in addition to their natural habitat. There were a lot of lofty statements made by government members about protecting our natural heritage for our children, our grandchildren and future generations coming along.

In view of all that, there was a certain expectation that comments would be taken into consideration, that requests for hearings and further debate would be allowed, but what did they do? Instead of allowing all that, what we have is a time allocation motion, again refusing to listen to many voices calling for further consultation, particularly in the north where the impact of this particular legislation is going to be felt very directly by our First Nations peoples who, although it's said that they were consulted, it would appear that they certainly don't feel that way, and their voices are important to be heard as part of this whole discussion.

But all this is for the sake of political expediency, all this because we have an election coming up in the next few short months, and because anything that's even remotely related to the environment, as this is of course, is now considered to be a hot topic and resonates with the voters—the cynical amongst us would suggest that this was the real motivation here for bringing this legislation forward at this particular time.

It's clear that there's no great philosophical commitment here, just a desire to show the voters how green they think they are, that we're seeing them proceed with this legislation at this point. In my view, the position that's been taken by the government with respect to this bill is disingenuous to say the least, because if they were truly committed to the stated aims of this bill, the protection of endangered species and species at risk and protecting their habitat, they would be listening to the voices of the people who are going to be directly concerned, who know about these factors, who know what needs to be taken into consideration, and yet those voices simply aren't going to be heard.

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There have been concerns expressed by a wide and diverse group of stakeholders, including the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the mayors of a number of municipalities, among many others. I would just like to quote from comments that have been made by a few of those groups about the fact that this matter has proceeded with undue haste.

Michael Power, mayor of Geraldton and president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, has said, "No one that I know at the municipal level or among the resource stewardship community is opposing a species at risk act, but, considering what is at stake, we want to ensure the new legislation and regulations are

truly effective in protecting species at risk and that jobs and economic prosperity are not unduly sacrificed in the process.”

Lynn Peterson, the mayor of Thunder Bay, stated on March 12 in a media release, “No one is saying that we shouldn’t be taking action to address species at risk, but we want to make absolutely certain that we get this legislation right. It’s going to be with us for years to come and we shouldn’t be rushing headlong into it if we don’t know what the effects may be.”

Finally, Paul Mistele, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said on March 26: “A fast-track approach to this legislation will not give us the ability to inform and involve the thousands of farmers who may be affected. It is imperative that the government put the emphasis on engagement, not expedience.”

I couldn’t agree more. But this is just another example of the McGuinty government’s attitude toward the public with respect to many of these issues: “We’ll tell you what’s good for you; we’ll tell you what you should be thinking about this,” whether it’s the right thing to do or not. As long as the optics are good, full steam ahead. This really does not do justice to a bill that is so important to all of us.

Mr. Murdoch: I’m glad to have some time to debate this crucial bill and another unjust move by the Liberal government to force this into closure. It was interesting to hear the minister today—and we have the minister for democratic renewal; I guess she should certainly be listening tonight, because this is what is wrong with this House, and it’s happened many times.

I’d like to mention that the minister mentioned that he was in Thunder Bay and said he listened to people about this. Let’s see what they had to say after he left:

“Today’s invitation-only, 90-minute meeting of select stakeholders is not the transparent and comprehensive public hearings that is required for the province’s new endangered species legislation, Bill 184, say those attending the session.

“Many questions and significant concerns were aired at today’s hastily organized meeting, and municipal leaders, industry and businesses from across Ontario have urged Minister of Natural Resources David Ramsay to take the necessary time and measures to ensure the province’s Endangered Species Act is on the right track. ‘Considering the new Endangered Species Act could be with us for 30 years or more, it’s far better to get this right than get it fast,’ stated Greenstone mayor and president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Michael Power. With second reading of the Endangered Species Act, Bill 184, continuing on Tuesday (April 17) night, the Legislature heard that the government has before it resolutions from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Large Urban Mayors’ Caucus of Ontario that had not yet been addressed.”

Imagine that. And the minister says everything is fine.

“If, as government claims, the current language of the endangered species bill is the gold standard, then they should not be afraid to consult more broadly,” states

Mayor Power, who also notes that Premier McGuinty and Minister Ramsay have received resolutions from over 66 individual municipalities across Ontario,” including Grey county, “asking for greater public input in the legislation. Numerous stakeholder groups representing farmers, home-builders, forestry, waterpower, mining, anglers, hunters and trappers have also pressed for greater consultation.

“The minister heard that people represented here today want to support the Endangered Species Act, but as it is currently written, it is questionable if Bill 184 will adequately protect species at risk”—we’ve heard a lot about that tonight—“and there are deep reservations that there could be unnecessary job losses and negative impacts on people and communities across the province,” said president/CEO of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, Jamie Lim.

“Furthermore, Minister Ramsay is correct in his statement that there is misinformation being spread about the bill and that’s why we need government committee to take this to the north and to all corners of the province to seek clarity,” adds Mayor Power.

“Thunder Bay Mayor Lynn Peterson notes, ‘We have told the minister that more time must be taken to make certain that the act is properly focused and that the people—the landowners, the cities and towns upon which the success of the act depends—can work with the legislation and regulations.’

“As Nipigon’s Mayor Richard Harvey told the minister, ‘If we can’t get the act right, how can we get the regulations right,’ summarizing the sentiments of municipal leaders who attended.

“The meeting at Thunder Bay’s Prince Arthur Hotel was one of the three meetings put together” just in one week. “The minister was steadfastly told that public hearings must be taken on the road to communities across Ontario where, in an open forum, the government can hear what is needed to make the Endangered Species Act work for both species at risk and for the people of Ontario.”

Now, that was sent from the north. It’s unfortunate that tonight I haven’t heard from any members of the Liberal Party speaking in favour of what their mayors from the north want. They have gone quiet. The members who represent this government in the north are afraid to come here and say, “We want this to go out.” I see some of the members are in the House, but they won’t speak up. They’re afraid. They’ve been whipped to force us to put this bill ahead of everything else, get it out of the way. As the member from Sudbury said, there are 70 species at risk and they’re not going to put this bill in force until next summer. What is wrong, then, with going out and meeting the people?

Some of the resource groups across Ontario, like the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Mining Association, the Ontario forestry alliance, the Ontario Fur Managers Federation, the Ontario Waterpower Association, would like this government to come and hear what they have to say.

The minister said, "I've talked to them." Obviously, you didn't talk to them or we've got a problem here. You're saying you did and they're saying you didn't. Then they say that the Ministry of Natural Resources has money to help out. We've heard about their bake drives and things like that. Just maybe, though, the minister could go to one of the other ministers who sit behind him. They seem to have a big slush fund. Maybe they would help the ministry out. Maybe that slush fund money could go to the Ministry of Natural Resources and help some of the conservation officers get money for gas for their trucks, and maybe for this bill.

I think the Minister of Natural Resources should be up sitting beside the other minister instead of the minister he's sitting beside, because she doesn't seem to care; she's just fine. Democratic renewal: what's that? I'm sure there are Liberals who say, "What is that word anyway? We talked about it in the election, but we sure forgot about it once we got elected."

Here's another one: "The Ontario Federation of Agriculture ... representing the interests of over 38,000 farm family members and businesses across Ontario, wholeheartedly supports the protection and recovery of species at risk. However, we do have serious concerns with a number of provisions within the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007," and they list them—this letter went to the members.

"For these reasons, we request that standing committee hearings be scheduled to enable closer public scrutiny of the act, to ensure its potential impacts are known and to provide amendments as necessary to ensure it is practical legislation.

"Furthermore, we specifically request that these meetings be held across rural and northern Ontario, to allow the individuals and organizations who will be directly impacted by the Endangered Species Act, 2007, to have the opportunity to make their views on this legislation known."

What would be wrong with that? That is just democracy. But I think this government has forgotten about that. They sort of promised something, like democratic renewal, but what's a promise these days when you're in government? Just forget about it. We can blame the other government that's been around for a while. That will last for a few years, but unfortunately that excuse runs out, and it's run out for this government. They've run out of time. They'd like to get out of here. I think their slush fund is running dry and they have no more money to send out to all these people so, "We better get out of here." The unfortunate part is, we have Liberals who were elected in the north. They're afraid to come to this Legislature and stick up for this bill and have it go out so that people in their ridings can hear about it. They're afraid to stand up here and say, "We think it should go out," and that is a sad tune to have happening in our province.

I thank you for my little bit of time and will leave it for somebody else.

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Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It is a pleasure to join the debate to talk about the time allocation motion that is before us on this particular evening. One of the things that I've always been proud of, being in the government in which I am privileged to serve, is the few times that the government has used time allocation. So far, my calculations show that of 97 bills that the government has passed, it has time-allocated 17. If you're keeping track, that's about 18%. We can contrast that with, for example, going back a decade and a half—what did the NDP time-allocate? They time-allocated, in their first and the only term in government, 31% of their bills, nearly one in three, and considerably less than the Conservative government that we replaced, a government that time-allocated a whopping 107 bills. Nearly 50% of all the bills they passed were time-allocated—closure, debate shut down.

People who are watching out there will say, "What is time allocation? Why do you time-allocate things?" Well, sometimes you time-allocate it to simply get it out into committee. And other times you time-allocate it to get it passed and get it implemented. In this case it's to get it out to committee.

Earlier, my colleague the member for Simcoe North asked rhetorically, "Why have we increased spending in this province by \$23 billion?" I think this is a good question. Let's look at some of the answers to that. So that health care can remain publicly funded, publicly controlled and publicly accountable. So that in Mississauga we can have our capital projects at Credit Valley Hospital, we have our fourth linear accelerator a year ahead of schedule. So the Trillium Health Centre can have its project under way, so that William Osler can get underway.

Why have we increased spending in this province? So that our schools will remain publicly owned, so that our students have access to the resources that they need for the type of first-class education that they all deserve. For example, in my own riding, Stephen Lewis Secondary School just opened in Churchill Meadows, St. Joan of Arc Secondary School in Churchill Meadows, and no fewer than six elementary and one new middle school—new schools.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: What do new schools have to do with endangered species?

The Acting Speaker: I will let the member get to his point. He's only been on this for a second.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

Let's get back to the point of time allocation. Now, in their last session, in 2003, the Conservatives time-allocated 83% of the bills that they passed—83%.

What are some of the other reasons that we've increased spending in this province? While the Conservatives time-allocate five out of six bills, this government passed bills to have clean water to drink, passed bills to have meat inspectors, passed bills to be able to hire 8,000 nurses that we need to replace the ones the previous

government let go. Let's be clear: We're not going to treat this House with the disrespect that some of the opposition parties—this is how they earned their privilege of being in opposition—did, by just time-allocating willy-nilly. We've time-allocated when it has been necessary. We've time-allocated so that we have the time to debate some substantive bills, bills that sustainably balance the Ontario budget, something this government has done for the past two years, bills that enable us to now begin paying down the \$40 billion of debt added by the Harris-Eves Tories and the \$80 billion of debt from the hapless half-decade of the NDP.

The Eves government, in its last session, used time allocation five out of six times in eight years. The Harris-Eves government never had more than three days of second reading debate on a budget bill—never, never, never.

So now we have a proper and sustainable greenbelt that's not only all of the promised 500,000 hectares pledged in 2003, it's twice that.

One of the rare and fast-disappearing species in Mississauga, because of course this bill is all about Bill 184, the species-at-risk act, is of course a bird known as the most bittern, perhaps allied to my colleague from Beaches-East York, who told this House that a petition read by many government members in support of community mediation is in some way related to a properly documented facilities renewal grant.

Of course we have to keep coming back to time allocation, and the NDP, when they were in power, used time allocation five times more than the Liberal government they replaced.

Our communities of new Canadians, some 50,000 of whom are served by an agency called Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services, are today able to see NDP rhetoric for the self-serving empty rhetoric that it truly is.

Let me tell you about how that one agency is led. Its executive director started with one part-time assistant and took a salary cut when she accepted the position 14 years ago.

Interjection.

Mr. Delaney: This is something that the member for Hamilton East seems to be very touchy about, and well she should be.

The executive director took that position so that she could be near her sons as they grew up. That was under the NDP government, and that was about eight years before I met her. She found ways to fund programs in the years of Tory cuts and now supervises 70 staff in four locations, and they are my constituents. They serve 50,000 new Canadians in Peel region. Andrea Seepersaud is my partner. I'm proud of her, and I'm proud of the agency that is my constituent in western Mississauga. I supported their bid to bring community mediation to a broader spectrum of people in Mississauga, as well as in Brampton and Caledon. The proposal was supported by the local city councils. They received their client referrals from the Peel police and bylaw enforcement officers.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think it's incumbent on us to either talk about the time allocation motion or the Endangered Species Act. That's what this debate's supposed to be about. They're cutting off debate as it is, and they're not even talking about the subject.

The Acting Speaker: I think the point is well taken. I think the member should go back to the point at hand, which is species at risk or the time allocation.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker.

There were no public hearings when the NDP raised the gas tax by 3.4 cents a litre. And there were no public hearings when the NDP ripped up collective agreements for their social contract and no time allocated for third reading debate.

I realize that some of the members are rather touchy about this. I say to those who are watching in Mississauga, we should be bigger than the remarks made earlier today about an immigrant woman from Guyana, about the agency that she built and the 50,000 people she enriches. I know the member from—least bittern—Beaches-East York, as a gentleman, I know him as a skilled parliamentarian and I would, across the party divide, call him a friend.

I'll continue to speak not only in favour of this motion for time allocation, but for my constituent Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services and also for funding for community mediation, not because Andrea's my partner, but because the cause is right, the agency is worthy and the people need it.

During the entire 37th Parliament, the PCs only averaged slightly higher than a shameful half-session day, 0.66 days, in terms of third reading debates.

My time is about up, and frankly I've made my point, so I thank the House for its indulgence and I defer to the next speaker.

2100

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's a pleasure to speak this evening on the closure motion before us on Bill 184.

It's interesting to hear the comments from across the floor. I think we have consensus that we need to move forward on this piece of legislation. The original piece of legislation of 1971 is very outdated—36 years old. We only have 42 of 176 endangered species currently protected, and I think we're not living up to the responsibility of future generations or present-day Ontarians who want to see more done to protect endangered species in the province of Ontario. Certainly, the Conservative Party had eight years to move forward on this, and nothing happened. The NDP had five years, and nothing happened.

We on this side of the House certainly—I hear some of the comments about consultation, discussions and potential amendments to this piece of legislation. During the committee process, we'll obviously be having a very thorough look at anything that comes forward that is constructive, critical or evaluative to improve and enhance this legislation, because we want to move forward

with a piece of legislation that is effective and responsible in meeting the needs when it comes to endangered species. But we need to get past the rhetoric of the opposition parties who continue to delay and drag on this process so that we can deliver what Ontarians want to see happen.

On the one hand, I hear opposition members saying we need more consultation, and then we're not moving fast enough. I'm not sure which it is, but on this side of the House we know it's been 36 years and only 42 species out of 176 that need to be protected are going to be protected under this piece of legislation. I think it's a very progressive piece of legislation.

I also want to commend the Minister of Natural Resources, the Honourable David Ramsay, for introducing this piece of legislation and for doing the work—much of the groundwork here—that has brought us to this particular point.

When it comes to consultation, I want to talk about a couple of aspects of consultation. We began our consultation a year ago in May. We've consulted widely with key landowner organizations, conservation organizations, aboriginal communities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the public, through newspaper ads and through the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. There has been consultation after consultation after consultation. Thirty-six years have gone by with no progress on this, and we're either going to be a government this day in Ontario that will move forward with legislation or we're going to continue like past governments did and drag our feet—and we're not going to do that, because on this side of the House we want to be responsible when it comes to endangered species. We can't afford in Ontario, frankly, to have more species join the ranks of the endangered lists, lose their habitat and so on, in the province of Ontario.

We've talked to the aboriginal community. On May 10, 2006, MNR mailed invitations to all First Nations and provincial tribal organizations, and put forward a discussion paper called *Towards Better Protection of Species at Risk in Ontario*. In fact, on September 15, MNR sent a further invitation for a series of 10 meetings to be held across Ontario which included many of the First Nations groups and tribal organizations in the province of Ontario.

Let me tell you a little bit about the organizations that were consulted. The Fort Severn First Nation, the Sandy Lake First Nation, Sachigo Lake First Nation, Keewatin First Nation, Poplar Hill First Nation, Deer Lake First Nation, Pikangikum First Nation, North Spirit Lake First Nation, Cat Lake First Nation, Fort Hope First Nation, Webequie, Summer Beaver First Nation, White-water Lake First Nation, Northern Chiefs tribal organization, Matawa Chiefs, Windigo Tribal and the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation—all invited to participate, give us their feedback, give us their concerns and play a role in what is a very progressive piece of legislation.

Consultations took place and meetings were held in Peterborough on October 13, in Timmins on October 17, in Sudbury on October 18, in North Bay on October 19,

in Parry Sound on October 24, in London on October 26, in the Ottawa area on October 30, on November 7 in Kenora, on November 8 in Sioux Lookout and on November 9 in Thunder Bay. The sessions were extensive and we were obviously working toward gathering important information and feedback from organizations right across the province, and we were very pleased to do that.

I should point out that on April 17 we also conducted consultations in Thunder Bay, on April 19 in Sudbury and on April 23, today, over at the Sutton Place Hotel. Last week I was in Kingston. MNR staff were in Windsor, and last Thursday the Minister of Natural Resources was in Thunder Bay for further consultations.

I think we need to get beyond the excuses on the other side of House that there has not been adequate consultation, that we're not interested in listening to First Nations or any other organization in the province of Ontario, and let's deal with the issue at hand, which is whether or not we're going to pass legislation in the provincial Legislature that is going to further protect endangered species in the province. If you're not interested in supporting it, you're going to have your opportunity to stand in your place and vote however you feel most reflects the views of your constituents. Certainly I know what I'm going to do. I'm very pleased to support this legislation, and I'm pleased that we have a minister that has done a fantastic job when it comes to this bill and a government that's prepared to deal with the real issues here, as opposed to sliding things under the carpet, as has been done in the past on this type of legislation, and really not taking the time to deal with this.

There are all kinds of organizations in the province of Ontario that have come forward and supported this particular legislation. Let's hear what the chair of the Conservation Ontario organization, Richard Hibma, has to say: "Conservation Ontario commends the government of Ontario for undertaking a review of the Endangered Species Act, which will result in improved protection for species at risk. The province led a very inclusive consultation process"—let me say that again—"a very inclusive consultative process during the review and the conservation authorities were pleased to participate."

The other aspect of this legislation is that the federal Species at Risk Act, which came into force in 2004—as part of the national accord, there is a responsibility of the provinces to live up to their end of the agreement. What we're doing on this side of the House is living up to that end of the agreement. We are passing legislation, as agreed to with the federal government, living up to the national accord, to make sure that we do our part in the province of Ontario to protect species at risk.

Another comment, from Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence: "The new Endangered Species Act is a significant step forward for Ontarians and the natural heritage we all value so highly. This new legislation will provide an inclusive, science-based and effective framework within which to balance different environmental and economic priorities."

The other important aspect of this legislation is that we take out the political assessment as to what is endangered and what is not. The scientific community will determine whether a species at risk will be identified, and the proper steps will be taken to ensure that their habitat is protected and that they will in fact be on the list. On this side of the House, we're not going to leave that to political chance, for any political party. I'm not a scientist; I don't profess to be. I want someone who has the scientific background and knowledge making those assessments to ensure that the endangered species at risk list is based on empirical and scientific data and information that we can all hold up and say, "This stands the test of science, and it's legitimate." This is an important aspect of the bill and we're pleased that we're moving in this direction. It is going to mean a significant step forward in protecting the species at risk in Ontario.

Again, only 42 of 176 identified are on this list. We can't delay any longer, we can't wait any longer, and we can't allow the opposition parties, who want to stand here and drag this on and on, to not move forward with this legislation.

2110

Mr. Sterling: It's wonderful to get a small opportunity to speak on this bill, because debate is being cut off. Within the time allocation motion, in the generosity and charity of the government, they're going to give two days of committee hearings here in the city of Toronto.

This bill affects, in large part, the more rural and remote areas of the province of Ontario. A lot of people have talked about northern Ontario, but I want to tell you that the rural part of eastern Ontario has significant endangered species in their environment as well. I speak from experience with regard to how this kind of legislation can affect a person's property rights. You know what? This bill is about trying to protect endangered species for the good of us all, but often that good for all of us comes at the expense of an individual. It's a hard balance to reach between what all the citizens of the province as a whole should benefit from and how much a particular property owner should suffer as a result of that. If a farmer's field is the habitat of an endangered species, he's restricted in what he can do in that field, whether he can go out and take the hay or the crop off that particular field. If a person's forest is designated as a habitat for an endangered species, then they're restricted in what activities they can undertake within that forested area. Therefore, you have to strike a balance that is acceptable to the people.

I think one of the problems we've experienced with regard to this bill is that people don't understand what the present law is and what changes to the present laws are put in this particular legislation. I agree with some of the changes, but I disagree with some other changes.

The one I am most concerned about is the lack of responsibility by the minister responsible for this act regarding decisions that are made in naming endangered species. I'm very much a believer that the buck stops with the minister who's responsible for a particular piece

of legislation. Therefore, I am very concerned, as are some of the stakeholders, about the fact that this bill gives away the final decision as to the naming of a specified endangered species to a group of non-elected, appointed people. As we know, their decisions are based upon science, but they're also based upon personal opinion, etc. It's very important that the makeup of that committee be balanced between not only those who are most scientifically capable but also that some of the people on the committee understand how the naming of those species will affect the people who own the property that I talked about.

This government has shown a callous disregard for the rights of anybody with regard to their property. We saw it with regard to the Adams Lake mine legislation, where they stripped the property owner of his rights and took away from him the right to sue in court for his proper damages for stripping away his property rights. Many newspapers, including the *Globe and Mail* and the *Ottawa Citizen*, said in their editorials that they could not understand how a government could absolutely ignore the rule of law, make a retroactive law and strip away property rights.

I think the members opposite, on the government side, can understand my hesitation at trying to give away the right to a group of people who are not elected, where nobody can go and complain about what has or hasn't happened to them.

I must say that I was amazed at the speech from the member for Mississauga West. I tried to bail him out by intervening and putting out points of order, but I guess he illustrates better than anyone why this government wants to get out of here and get out of here soon. To try to defend a grant to one's spouse in a program where there's no application, there are no requirements, where there is—

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Standing order 23(b)(i) refers to matters under discussion, of which this is not one; and standing order 23(h) prohibits the making of an allegation against another member.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock.

The member is raising a point, but the member spoke at length on the same subject, and although he was warned, continued to do so. In terms of the allegation, I have not yet heard an allegation, but if one is made, I will stop it.

The member from Lanark—Carleton.

Mr. Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think this shows a total lack of regard by this government to take responsibility for their actions, whether it's a minister or a parliamentary assistant or a member who cannot understand where blatant conflict is apparent to everyone else in this place and in the public. This is a tremendous—

Mr. Delaney: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

The Acting Speaker: On a point of order. Stop the clock. I don't know. There's nothing to stop, but go ahead.

Mr. Delaney: Standing order 23(i) specifically prohibits the making of an imputed false or unavowed motive to another member.

The Acting Speaker: I have to tell you I have not heard an imputed or unavowed motive being made. In any event, the time has now expired.

Mr. Bentley has moved government motion number 334. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2118 to 2128.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie

Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy

Peters, Steve
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David

Brownell, Jim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Duguid, Brad
Fonseca, Peter
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat

Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David

Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Horwath, Andrea

Martel, Shelley
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Sterling, Norman W.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 32; the nays are 10.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The time now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Etobicoke Lakeshore			
Glengarry Prescott Russell			
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Second Session, 38th Parliament

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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 24 April 2007

Mardi 24 avril 2007



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NIAGARA WEEK

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Mr. Speaker, as you and members of the assembly well know, this is the third annual Niagara Week at Queen's Park. I want to welcome Chair Partington, the regional chair of Niagara, various mayors and regional councillors and business leaders from Niagara, and I want to congratulate Patrick Gedge, the CEO of the Niagara Economic Development Corp., and his team for organizing the meetings and events here today. It has been used very successfully by Niagara business and municipal leaders to win such progress as widening the 406, an extension on the lease of Casino Niagara and funding for the Vineland Research Station, which happens to be in my riding.

We hope to see—

Applause.

Mr. Hudak:—there we go, good projects.

We hope to see increased progress on a number of the issues they are pursuing today, including further expansion of Highway 46 to the south. I certainly hope as well that we'll see some movement, finally, on the mid-peninsula corridor, which, sadly, the McGuinty government has thrown into reverse.

An important issue as well is that this is really the first test of the greenbelt legislation. Anyone can draw a line on the map, but very few have the leadership to make investments to ensure it's a success.

We have now, with the closure of the Cadbury Schweppes plant, a crisis in our grape juice industry, where contracts run out at the end of the year, which will result in, effectively, agricultural brownfields in the greenbelt. If the Premier is committed to the greenbelt legislation, I suggest that he immediately invest in the grape replant program to help out these growers.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Last week, the McGuinty government released the names of 15 outstanding

teachers from across Ontario who will receive the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

The students attending Westview Centennial Secondary School in my riding of York West are incredibly fortunate to study with a teacher who sits on that very accomplished list of educators. Mr. Amare Demesie will be receiving the award for his role in science, math and physics at a special event on May 2, 2007. Mr. Demesie arrived in Canada in 1983 from Ethiopia as a refugee and studied physics and astronomy at York University. He has now become an accomplished physicist with a deep passion for teaching. He prefers to educate and inspire the youth of our great community rather than move on to more prestigious university posts.

He is a role model for students and teachers alike. Mr. Demesie is a strict teacher, challenging and engaging his students, and a man who believes that failure is not an option. Since Mr. Demesie arrived at Westview Centennial, 13 of his students have reached the top 10% in all of the country. His students are from the riding of York West and many of them are from immigrant families.

Today, I would like to congratulate Mr. Demesie and all the many educators across the province who make such a difference every day in the lives of our youth.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): Almost as quickly as the money he shovelled out the door and into the hands of his Liberal friends, so went the integrity of yet another McGuinty minister. Yesterday in this House, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration pleaded guilty to blindly awarding hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants to organizations tied to prominent Liberals without so much as a paper trail, in the hopes that his announcement of a new application process would mitigate the serious damage already done by his actions. Once again, we see a government that acts only after it has been caught.

This latest revelation only adds to the already well-established trend of a total lack of ministerial accountability by members of this government, the most recent example of which was of course the apparent cover-up with respect to the lottery scandal. Ontarians have to be asking themselves, exactly how much mismanagement will Premier McGuinty really tolerate on behalf of his government? The fact that his ministers continue to hold the belief that they should be accountable to an entirely new set of standards than those who came before them is

really quite astounding, but I suppose at this point not altogether surprising.

In the Ombudsman's recent indictment of the OLG, he cited chief among his concerns the "culture that places profits before responsibility" at the lottery corporation. But I would suggest this characterization could be applied to Premier McGuinty's own cabinet table.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): Today, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner took the Premier to task for failing working families who care about protecting the environment and sustaining our natural resources. The Minister of the Environment, who usually takes every opportunity to comment on anything environmental, seems not to be taking advantage of this opportunity today—no surprise, I guess.

In a special report, Gord Miller issued a stinging rebuke to the McGuinty Liberals. He found that the Liberals are shortchanging the environment and resource-based communities by failing to provide the environment and natural resources ministries with adequate funding and support. We can sum it up in this: big words, small action. That's Dalton McGuinty's record on the environment. What working families want is bold action to fight climate change and pollution, but Ontarians can't make it happen if the people are not assigned to the job and the financial support is not there to get the job done.

Remember, this isn't the first time the McGuinty government has had to face the facts. Last year, the Environmental Commissioner raised the matter in his 2006 annual report, titled *Neglecting Our Obligations*. We've raised this matter repeatedly and on each occasion when we've raised it, the McGuinty government has acknowledged the need to do more and then has done nothing. The McGuinty government needs to stop dithering, delaying and denying; it's time to provide these key ministries with the resources they need to protect our environment and sustain our natural resources.

UNITED WAY OF PEEL REGION

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I stand here today to speak about an organization that set a lofty goal and achieved it. The mission of this organization is to improve our most vulnerable citizens' lives and build communities by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action. Last year, the United Way of Peel Region set a fundraising goal of \$13 million. Their campaign lasted a mere three months, from September 1 to December 1, and at the end of this time period, the United Way of Peel Region found itself meeting its goal and surpassing it. The final total was \$13,355,000.

These funds will impact all Peel communities by continuing to mobilize collective action to create measurable and ever-lasting change and improving the lives of the people who need its assistance. In addition, these funds will allow the United Way to continue to improve social

conditions in Peel. Behind reaching this great accomplishment was Shelley White, the executive director, and 2006 campaign cabinet chair Carl Oxholm. Carl is a partner in the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. There were 92 new leadership donors who gave a minimum of \$1,000 to raise a total of \$105,000. As well, 31 local businesses participated for the first time, resulting in a more than \$300,000 boost to the campaign.

With the combination of the will and the collective at the United Way of Peel Region, the people of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon are better served. Congratulations to the United Way.

1340

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds—Grenville): It's said that membership in the Ontario Liberal Party has its privileges, and, much like a credit card company, the Liberals have established their own rewards program.

If you're the common-law partner of a Liberal MPP, then you are pre-approved for a grant of \$25,000. If your group's board of directors includes a Liberal riding president, then you are pre-approved for a grant of \$100,000. And if your group's board of directors includes a future Liberal candidate, then, by golly, you are pre-approved for a grant of \$200,000. If all seven of your group's board of directors—seven out of seven—are Liberal donors, then what do you know? You qualify for a \$200,000 grant.

And don't worry about provincial deficits. The finance minister says that \$200,000 is a pittance. With the red slush card, you just can't lose. The red slush card lets you jump ahead of the unwashed masses, the folks who work hard, pay their taxes, line up for health care and expect their government to act responsibly with their tax dollars.

It's clear the McGuinty Liberals have stolen the front-of-the-line program from American Express, and it's been open season for Liberal supporters to access millions of Ontario taxpayer dollars. No application process, no approval process, just your little red slush fund card and, voila, you're at the front of the line.

ENERGY FORUM

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): I rise in the House today to speak about the energy forum that I attended on Saturday afternoon at White Oaks Mall in London alongside Minister Bentley. The energy forum was a wonderful opportunity for residents of London to receive information about how they can become more energy efficient in their day-to-day lives.

Participants of the energy forum set up booths with information as to how residents can conserve energy. Many businesses were represented, such as Union Gas, London Hydro and the Mercedes Smart Car, and all provided wonderful alternatives for the public to be energy efficient and more environmentally friendly. Union Gas,

for example, handed out water-saving shower heads, London Hydro handed out energy-saving light bulbs, and Minister Bentley and I handed out seedling trees.

This was a wonderful event, and the response from the people of London was enthusiastic and encouraging. I would like to thank all of the wonderful businesses that came to the forum. This event would not have been as successful without the generosity and time of those people who participated in this event. I would also like to thank Minister Bentley and his office for all the organizing they did in order to make this event possible.

It is important for all of us to do our part to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to be more environmentally friendly. I believe that by holding events such as the energy forum and getting the message out about alternative uses of energy, we are taking the right steps forward to becoming more efficient in our lives.

NIAGARA WEEK

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise in the House today to recognize what has become an excellent tradition at Queen's Park, which is, for the third year in a row, Niagara Week. I'd like to welcome many members from the Niagara region who are here—politicians, private and public sector alike—to join us for Niagara Week.

They will be holding a reception later this afternoon, so I invite all of you who are in the Legislature to come and bring your staff. It's considered one of the best receptions held at Queen's Park every year. Be there or be square. That's the bottom line.

It has been absolutely a pleasure, a privilege and an honour to represent a part of this province that is dynamic and beautiful and exciting. While everybody knows that tourism and wine are synonymous with the Niagara region, manufacturing, public service, health care, education and agriculture are also major sectors that are big and growing, and that we as a government have been supporting in many ways.

I've enjoyed working in partnership, as my colleagues Kim Craitor and Jim Bradley have, to make sure that our government has come to the table with two new hospitals, not just one but two—two new hospices in St. Catharines and Grimsby. I think the member opposite is vaguely familiar with Grimsby. We are also very proud to have brought infrastructure like highways, and educational institutions are growing with us as well.

So I just want to encourage everybody to celebrate what's good in Niagara, and make sure you're there this afternoon.

ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On behalf of Premier McGuinty and my colleagues, I rise for the purpose of recognizing an historic event that took place 59 years ago, the establishment of the state of Israel. It is

the fulfillment of prophecies, prayers and dreams. On this festive occasion, may all of us join in the hopes and prayers of Jewish people here and in Israel that the day may not be far off when the people of Israel and the nations of the world lay down their arms, turn their swords into ploughshares and realize the beautiful word of peace, "shalom."

The people of Israel wish simply to structure their own future and determine their own destiny. They want to ensure that the torch of freedom and democracy is passed on to generation and generation, and even to the children's children.

I wish to recognize the presence of the diplomatic corps of the state of Israel, including Consul General Brosh and members of the Canadian Jewish religious, cultural and fraternal associations: Mr. Ted Sokolsky, president of the United Jewish Appeal; Mr. Moshe Ronen, vice-president of the World Jewish Congress; Dr. Frank Dimant, executive vice-president of B'nai Brith Canada; Mr. Ed Morgan, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress; and finally, Dr. Charles McVety, president of Canada Christian College.

Congratulations and shalom.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario concerning the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to assemble for introduction.

Safa Abdel Rahman from Don Valley East; Mirabai Alexander from Thunder Bay—Superior North; Midila Anton from York South—Weston; Rachel Baker from Windsor West; Salena Barry from Parkdale—High Park; Omar Chahbar from London North Centre; Lauren Davidson from Whitby—Ajax; Caitlyn Emptage from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex; Tom Fischer from Huron—Bruce; Marissa Hendriks from Durham; Zachary Hervieux-Moore from Timiskaming—Cochrane; Matei Leshchyshen from Etobicoke Centre; Brendon Osmann-Deyman from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound; Rhiannon Parry from Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford; Julie Ramkumar from Timmins—James Bay; Dillon Sambasivam from Don Valley West; Zane Schwartz from Beaches—East York; Doug Spencer, Stoney Creek; Sridaya Srivatsan, Mississauga East; Ali Sunderji, Vaughan—King—Aurora; Christian Webster, Willowdale; and Kenny White-Brown, Lanark—Carleton.

Help me welcome the pages.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to welcome to the Legislature today students from Alexander Mackenzie High School in Richmond Hill, along with their grade 10 civics class teacher, Steven Harper. Please welcome them.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like the opportunity to introduce some folks from my riding: Valerie and Ian and Steve and Brittney Darling. They are here visiting. Valerie Darling is also a past president of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Quinte West. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BATTERY DEPOSIT
AND RETURN ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007

SUR LA CONSIGNATION DES PILES

Mr. Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 217, An Act to establish a deposit and return system for batteries / Projet de loi 217, Loi établissant un régime de consignation pour les piles.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Millions of batteries are ending up in our landfills each year and the number of consumer batteries discarded is increasing dramatically, releasing a growing amount of dangerous substances into our land and water. This bill enacts a new act that prohibits persons from selling a battery unless it meets the standards prescribed by the regulations made under the act for being capable of being recycled. The seller charges a deposit to the purchaser as part of the sale price and the battery indicates that the deposit is refundable.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 24, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 327. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1354 to 1359.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Craiton, Kim	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Ferreira, Paul	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	Yakubski, John
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The McGuinty government remains committed to replacing coal-fired generation with cleaner power to improve the health of our citizens and contribute to the sustainability of our environment. We stand as the only jurisdiction in the world committed to phasing out coal. We remain steadfast in this and are determined we will not be distracted by half-measures, however well intentioned they might seem.

Some time ago, we asked the Ontario Power Authority to conduct a review of the impacts of emissions-control technology alternatives on air emissions associated with the operation of coal-fired generation in Ontario. We have considered that review, which is being released today.

The OPA found that none of the alternatives that are commercially available will reduce greenhouse gases, the primary contributor to global warming. Investing \$1.6 billion to install in plants technology that the OPA tells us will run only for a very brief period of time and does nothing to reduce greenhouse gases, does not make any sense.

We have come a very long way in the last four years, and we are committed to going further. Today, after four years of hard work, greenhouse gas emissions from Ontario coal stations are now below 1990 levels. We are in compliance with Kyoto.

Between 2003 and 2006, generation from coal plants has been cut by 32%. Over the same period, emissions from the plants also decreased. CO₂ emissions were reduced by 29%. SO₂ emissions reduced by 44% and NO_x emissions reduced by 46%. This is in stark contrast to the Tory record. Under the Tory government, Ontario's emissions from coal plants skyrocketed, with greenhouse gas emissions rising by 124%. Emissions reduction since 2003 has been made possible by this government's closure of Lakeview, by operational improvements in our coal plants and by reducing our reliance on coal as new base-load capacity comes online.

In just three years, we have set the wheels in motion to bring online just under 10,000 megawatts of cleaner, diversified generation—more than any other jurisdiction in North America. I am confident we will continue to see improvements and without the distraction of expensive refits of plants Ontario seeks to replace at the earliest possible time. Quite simply, there is no technology for so-called clean coal. I'm sure that members opposite will remind me that there's technology for cleaner coal. This is the equivalent of putting a filter on a cigarette. It just doesn't work. The emissions control technologies that exist today do nothing, absolutely nothing, to reduce greenhouse gases. I think any party that suggests we invest hundreds of millions of dollars in technology that does not do anything to reduce greenhouse gases has no interest in closing coal plants or in fighting climate change.

The power authority has suggested a course that would substantially reduce our use of coal by the end of 2011. The OPA suggests that some coal stations be maintained beyond 2011 to provide additional insurance for system capacity risk, but further suggests that coal plants can be gradually replaced with cleaner generation between 2011 and 2014. On that basis, we have determined that it makes better sense to replace coal as quickly as we can and not be sidetracked by the scrubber sideshow.

Indeed, emissions control equipment is already installed in Ontario's coal plants, notably Nanticoke, where all eight units use low-NO_x burners, two of which are equipped to reduce NO_x even further. At Lambton, two units out of four are equipped with scrubbers to reduce SO₂ and NO_x.

Overall emissions are also controlled to an important extent by improving operating efficiencies and using low-sulphur coal. With the exception of two units at

Lambton that have scrubbers and burn high-sulphur coal, all other Ontario plants burn low-sulphur coal.

Consider the efforts already taken to ensure our plants operate as cleanly as possible. Consider the record under this government of substantially reducing the operation of the plants in recent years. And remember our commitment to running these plants less in the future and ultimately replacing them as soon as possible with cleaner, greener forms of generation.

It would simply not be in the interests of Ontario ratepayers to sink amounts ranging from \$600 million to \$1.6 billion into these plants. As suggested in the OPA's review, the capital expenditure becomes even less effective the less the plants are run and the sooner they are replaced. That is certainly not our intent. Instead, our government will continue to focus on ensuring that Ontario is replacing coal-fired generation with cleaner power. This is the best course for the health of our citizens, the best course for Ontario ratepayers, and the best course for the sustainability of our environment.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to talk about the McGuinty government's commitment to help protect vulnerable workers in this province. We've moved forward by pledging an additional \$3.6 million annually to improve delivery and shorten the time it takes for employment standards claims. Enforcing fair and equitable employment standards is a key to a prosperous Ontario. As well, we're increasing our efforts to raise awareness and provide more accessibility to information. This \$3.6 million in additional funding will allow us to deal with higher numbers.

To increase awareness of employment standards rights and responsibilities, we've been conducting outreach and awareness efforts aimed at diverse communities. We've partnered with various community organizations, including the Centre for Information and Community Services of Ontario in Scarborough and the Settlement and Integration Services Organization in Hamilton. These organizations play an extremely important role in helping vulnerable newcomers, and we're reaching out to them. Right now, we have information in 23 different languages to make sure people understand their rights in Ontario.

As well, we're making it easier for people to file their claims. In 2006, the Ministry of Labour introduced Internet filing of claims and partnered with Service Ontario to provide and accept claims through our Service Ontario centres. By partnering with Service Ontario, we've increased the number of locations through which clients can access employment standards claim forms from 21 to 63 locations. We have a 24/7 online filing system, and that too has helped increase accessibility through Service Ontario centres.

Our government is putting an emphasis on proactive inspections in targeted sectors such as employment agencies where vulnerable workers are at greater risk of exploitation.

1410

We're preventing employment standards problems before they occur. In 2005, we established a dedicated employment standards team to conduct proactive inspections. The team beat its targets in the last two fiscal years and has recovered over \$4.1 million in wages and other monies owing to vulnerable workers.

We've done more to enforce the law in this province in our first term than was done in the two previous governments. This is mind-boggling. Between 1989 and 2003, there were 97 ESA prosecutions in the province—97 in 14 years. Since 2004, there have been more than 1,000 prosecutions completed. We're serious about protecting vulnerable workers, because this funding is going to help us better protect the workers of Ontario.

The two main priorities that we've moved forward on are province-wide resources to improve our capability on the investigation of claims and doing those proactive inspections, and as well, I'm pleased that my colleague David Oraziotti, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, was able to announce our support for a provincial claims centre in Sault Ste. Marie, to expedite the resolution process and shorten the time it takes to process claims. One million dollars of that new funding will result in the hiring of 15 new staff in Sault Ste. Marie. Those 15 in Sault Ste. Marie will help us serve the citizens of Ontario.

As well, the new funding will allow us to continue our targeted proactive inspection activities, because we want to make sure that employment standards contraventions are nipped in the bud. We want to deal with them before they happen. The added resources will also be complemented by our new province-wide computer system that will automate and standardize claims.

But that's not all we're doing for vulnerable workers. We've made a commitment, for after nine years of no increase in minimum wages, we're moving forward. We've seen four increases in four years, and we'll see additional increases moving from \$8 to \$10.25.

We're committed to improving the quality of life in Ontario. By investing in a system that will provide improved support and assistance to an even greater number of workers, including some of our most vulnerable, we are proving we are a compassionate government that cares about Ontario workers. We're committed to protecting employment rights in this province. We're getting results. This \$3.6 million in additional funding is going to help us do exactly that.

GROWTH PLANNING

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Here, at the beginning of Earth Week, I rise with tremendous pride to share with my colleagues in this House—indeed with all Ontarians—the latest significant steps that our government is taking to protect the province's valuable green space for Ontario's families.

Our government has long been committed to curbing the urban sprawl that is choking our communities and strengthening the environment that is so utterly important to the quality of life that we all enjoy today and that our children will enjoy tomorrow. So we're donating more than 200 acres of natural heritage lands to communities and organizations right across Ontario. I'm talking about a transfer of 10 significant green spaces—some big and some small—that stretch from Pickering to Hamilton and even south down to Essex county.

These properties contain a range of significant natural characteristics, such as wetlands, hardwood forests, environmentally sensitive areas, as well as unique waterfalls and trail systems. All of these properties are excellent examples of the types of outdoor spaces all Ontarians can enjoy, now and into the future. They are precisely the kinds of lands we have sworn to protect, and by transferring them to communities and organizations that share that very same commitment, we are doing exactly that.

We have to walk a very fine line as a government committed to rebuilding public infrastructure that has been sorely neglected for far too long while managing growth in one of North America's fastest-growing regions here in the greater Golden Horseshoe, and also protecting and increasing parkland and natural areas that have been unprotected and eroded for far too long. I am proud to say that we walk the walk and talk the talk with great success.

Our award-winning growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe will ensure that our infrastructure and growth needs will be met for a quarter century as almost four million new residents make this area their home, and they will be met strategically and with an eye on our natural environment.

That greenbelt that now stretches across southern Ontario will protect 1.8 million acres for our children, our grandchildren and future generations. We've protected 5,500 acres of ecologically sensitive land in Rouge Park and the new Bob Hunter Memorial Park, 650 acres of land in Oakville and 180 acres of natural heritage lands to create Hamilton's newest conservation area, Eramosa Park.

This government has already taken action by introducing tough new laws. But you know, it's not enough just to talk a good game on protecting the environment. You actually have to deliver, and Premier McGuinty and this government have done exactly that.

The expansion of our green spaces that I'm proud to be sharing with this House here today is another example of the McGuinty government's delivering on its commitment to the environment and delivering on its commitment to preserving green spaces that help make life in Ontario unique and wonderful.

Right across this province we are proving that sustainable development can be more than a buzzword or a concept or a dream; it can be and it will be a reality. We're proving that you can strengthen the vital infrastructure of our province, its hospitals and schools, its roads and bridges, while still contributing to cleaner air

and safer water and an environment of which we can all be proud.

As we celebrate Earth Week, let us remember that we are making decisions today that affect future generations. By protecting green spaces today, we are ensuring that they will be able to enjoy the outdoors as we all did when we grew up.

The McGuinty government has proven that with the right plan and with the right commitment we can create a cleaner, greener Ontario. We are proving it again today with the donation of these 10 parcels of land so that we can indeed ensure there will be ample, beautiful, vibrant green spaces for Ontario families to enjoy for generations to come.

CANCER PREVENTION PRÉVENTION DU CANCER

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): The week of April 23 marks the second annual Cancer Prevention Week. This year, the Canadian Cancer Society is focusing on the dangerous effects of ultraviolet radiation associated with unprotected sun exposure and the use of artificial tanning equipment. These risk factors are associated with skin cancer, a highly preventable disease.

Le cancer de la peau est la forme la plus courante de cancer au Canada. Il représente un tiers de tous les nouveaux diagnostics de cancer.

Deserving recognition today in the House are some of the Canadian Cancer Society staff that we partner with. I'd like to point out Rowena Pinto, Sarah Smith and Irene Gallagher from the Canadian Cancer Society and thank them very much for being here. They and tens of thousands of volunteers and staff are committed to the prevention of cancer and support for those currently living with this terrible disease.

The McGuinty government works with a wide range of partners, including the CCS, to help reduce Ontarians' risk of certain types of cancer by encouraging people to be smoke-free, to be active and to make healthy food choices on a daily basis.

Santé Canada estime que les coûts indirects associés au cancer dans la province avoisinent les 5 \$ milliards.

The Ministry of Health Promotion has a number of initiatives focused on addressing risk factors for the prevention of cancer. They include the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the smoke-free Ontario strategy. As you may know, the single largest cause of preventable deaths and cancer in Ontario is from smoking. Sixteen thousand people will die prematurely this year as a result of smoking. That's 44 people each and every day. Smoking is not only a contributing factor to lung cancer but also to pancreas, stomach, bladder, kidney, cervix and oesophagus cancers. That's why our government created the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, North America's most comprehensive tobacco control strategy.

Our healthy eating and active living strategy and Active 2010 sports and physical activity strategy includes programs and initiatives that support healthy eating and active living.

The ministry leads the Ontario heart health program, which has broadened its mandate to include other chronic diseases with the same modifiable risk factors. My ministry also supports the Eat Smart program, which is the initiative implemented at the local level with public health units, restaurant owners, workplace and school cafeteria suppliers to provide healthy food choices.

As Minister of Health Promotion, my mandate is to educate Ontarians at all ages and stages of life and to encourage making healthy choices to reduce the risk of certain types of cancer. These choices include increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables; being active every day; limiting amounts of alcohol; practising good sun safety; and being smoke-free.

1420

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague the Minister of Health, the staff in his ministry, and all the health care officials across Ontario for their work in the fight against cancer. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has reduced wait times for cancer-related surgeries by 16%. I'm delighted as an Ottawa-area member to see a doubling of the Ottawa Regional Cancer Centre and particularly as the MPP for Ottawa West-Nepean to see the Queensway Carleton Hospital have a cancer satellite operation. Regrettably, the Tory members on the other side of the House voted against the budget that included this very important initiative.

Last week, I had the honour of attending a special event in Ottawa at the Nepean Sportsplex to acknowledge the Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for—

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The minister keeps injecting additional material which was not provided to the opposition in the statement. He's required by the rules to provide us with a copy of the statement that he is to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The minister needs to provide the opposition members with the statement he is going to read. I will tell you, however, that the Speaker has no knowledge of what is in those particular remarks.

With that, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I know the member from Lanark-Carleton is embarrassed by that vote, and I can see why he raised that on a point of order.

This annual event, the Relay for Life, has grown into one of the most significant and poignant events. Last year, 358 communities raised \$38.2 million, an astounding accomplishment.

While it's important to recognize the memories of family members and friends who have lost their brave battle against cancer, we have to be equally passionate about those who are winning the fight today and for those who will challenge this disease tomorrow.

I end this statement by officially recognizing the Canadian Cancer Society staff and volunteers who gener-

ously give their valuable time, energy and passion towards fundraising efforts for cancer research, education, and awareness programs for cancer prevention.

Ensemble, nous pouvons faire toute la différence en édifiant une province plus saine. Together, we are making a difference to build a healthier Ontario. Together, let's make cancer history.

The Speaker: Statements by the ministry? Responses?

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In that we had four ministers speaking today in ministers' statements and they took 20 minutes, I would ask for unanimous consent that each opposition party be given half that time, 10 minutes, to respond instead of the five—

The Speaker: Thank you. Mr. Sterling has asked for unanimous consent for each opposition party to have 10 minutes to respond. Agreed? I heard a no.

Responses?

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's amazing how times change. In his ministerial statement today, there was not a single word about premature deaths or health care costs. Their argument for closing coal plants in 2002-03 was never about greenhouse gases; it was about health care costs and premature deaths.

I'm going to read you a couple of quotes—a couple from Dalton McGuinty and a couple from Dwight Duncan. Here are a couple from Dalton McGuinty: "It is estimated that in Ontario health care ... costs of smog are \$10.8 billion annually"; "Air pollution kills 1,900 of us every year"; "Taxpayers are spending over \$1 billion annually on health care costs...." From Dwight Duncan: "I urge that people understand the true cost associated with coal-powered generation: more than \$4.4 billion to our health care system...."; and "Emissions [cause] up to 668 premature deaths" per year. There's no argument about these.

It's a fact that they should have continued the program that the previous government embarked on years ago. In fact, the Environmental Commissioner has said that pollution abatement equipment should be installed on our coal-fired plants.

If we take the numbers and attach them to the Liberal inaction in the last four years, that's 2,800 premature deaths in this province since you came into power and \$4 billion in health care costs, if we're using the low numbers, since the McGuinty government was elected.

This coal abatement equipment would cost between \$0.5 billion and \$1.5 billion. That is a small amount of money compared to \$4 billion in health care costs and 2,800 deaths, and that's in the last four years. How many more before those coal plants are actually shut down?

They talk about emission numbers in 2006. Well, the summer was very good to them in 2006. As the president

of OPG said at the hearings, not a single thing this government has done led to lower emissions in 2006 on the part of the coal-fired plants. It was our government that ordered the closure of Lakeview; they only shut the door.

This government continues to be willing to play politics and gamble with the lives of Ontarians. It is my bet that they're not going to gamble on you again.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and his announcement today: I remember a very similar announcement during the Burlington by-election about giving some land to Burlington to try to buy votes, and a great concern that that land was contaminated. So I certainly hope that the 200 acres the minister announces today do not have similar problems. I don't want to look a gift horse in the mouth, but you've got to be careful of Dalton McGuinty bearing gifts when it's election time.

Two hundred acres? With all due respect, I'm proud to be part of a party that brought forward investment in the Bruce Trail, that brought forward the Niagara Escarpment plan, that brought forward the Oak Ridges moraine legislation, and that brought forward, in Lands for Life/Living Legacy, the single-largest expansion of parks and protected areas in the history of Ontario. Two hundred acres? It was 9.5 million hectares under the PC government.

My last comment for the minister: With all due respect, I hope he'll address the issue of the agricultural brownfield developing in Niagara with the loss of the contract for grape juices in the province. We'd like to see some infrastructure investments there to support the replant program brought forward.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): The Minister of Labour comes up today and says, "We're going to be pledging \$3.6 million in improving service delivery." I received a letter from him today saying that they're closing the Ministry of Labour office in the city of Barrie effective May 7. How is that going to improve one of the fastest-growing communities in this province? Minister Caplan was up there espousing the greatness of the city of Barrie today, and they're closing down the Ministry of Labour office on May 7, transferring the staff down to Newmarket or Toronto. You're taking jobs out of the city of Barrie and you're decreasing service quality by your actions, not only for the city of Barrie but for all of Simcoe county and Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Minister, we know where you're getting the additional \$3.6 million in funding: You're getting it out of closing this particular office and other offices throughout the province. The critic for the Ministry of Labour will be checking to see what other offices you're closing across this province—so-called improved service delivery. It's a

disgrace that they're closing that office in the city of Barrie.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Energy, and I want to begin my response with a little history. If we go back to June 2001 and September 2002, someone named Dalton McGuinty said that coal-fired plants were all going to be closed by 2007. In fact, the speeches were probably some of the most holier-than-thou speeches that anyone in Ontario can ever remember. But then, on June 15, 2005, the McGuinty government suddenly says, "Oh, we're not going to close these coal-fired plants by 2007." It suddenly became 2009. And then, a year later, on June 9, 2006, what had started out as closure by 2007 and had become closure by 2009 suddenly became closure by 2014.

What we hear today is more statements from the McGuinty government about coal-fired generating stations and coal-fired plants, and the only question I think people across Ontario are asking is this: "Why should we believe anything they say? Why should we believe any date they give? Why should we believe any figures, any statistics that they recite, because everything they have promised on this issue for the last six years has turned out to be false?"

1430

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Well, it's Earth Week, and yesterday we had a non-statement by the Minister of the Environment on climate change; today, the opportunity for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to talk about what he calls "significant steps." At the very least, his speech writers have a sense of humour.

This is a government that's setting up for major water diversions from Georgian Bay basin to Lake Ontario, a government poised to ram a branch of the big pipe through Bob Hunter park, a government that inadequately funds environmental protection, so that today the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario talked about Ontario ecosystems being at risk of what he called "catastrophic events." That's the care that they take of the environment.

The Environmental Commissioner said this government is not ensuring that raw or untreated sewage doesn't pollute our water. That's what the Environmental Commissioner has to say about this government and its environmental record. It's a shameful record.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My response is to the Minister of Labour. According to the Workers' Action Centre, only 18 companies were prose-

cuted in 2006. Ninety-eight per cent of employers found in violation of employment standards, including those who owe back wages of over \$30 million, do not face any penalty or prosecution; 37% of wage earners are part time or contract and lack any protection; 20,000 employees complained last year about unpaid wages; and only 1% of workplaces are ever inspected.

Those at the Workers' Action Centre demand that employees in this province finally be protected. They state that employees need 10% of workplaces to be inspected; they need convictions to carry penalties; they need legislation with teeth to protect those in temp or contract situations; they need the \$30.5 million in lost wages to be collected, not just \$4.1 million; and they need a living wage of \$10 an hour indexed to inflation now, Minister.

I'm sorry, but a new computer system and 15 new workers are not going to effect any real change in the fact that this province has no real enforcement of employment standards at all. I would say that a law not enforced is not a law. Enforce employment standards now.

CANCER PREVENTION

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): We acknowledge the importance of this week as Cancer Prevention Week because we know that cancer and deaths from cancer remain a serious public health issue, and that by 2020, cancer cases will increase by two thirds.

I hope that this week we will focus on the prevention aspects. That's why I want to congratulate the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division, for being here, and also acknowledge the work of all other cancer agencies that work on prevention and supports.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday in the Legislature, in asking a question of the Minister of Citizenship and Culture, I referred to Atma Singh Gill as being a member of the board of directors of the International Seniors Club and also the president of the Liberal Party riding association in Mississauga–Brampton South. I have since learned that they are two different people by the same name. I want to apologize to the two individuals in question and to the House for that inadvertent error.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. It's time that we remember where we are. Oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and

Immigration. It concerns the political slush fund. Let me reiterate the real issue here. Did you as minister, did the McGuinty government, exercise any duty of care at all in disbursing the taxpayers' money, as should be done with any group of all kinds when it involves any taxpayers' money at all?

The Shromani Sikh Sangat temple at 269 Pape Avenue in Toronto received \$100,000 from your slush fund. Will the minister please advise the House as to what sort of due diligence was performed, what sort of financial and other background information was required by you and by the government before it was granted \$100,000 of taxpayers' money in your year-end spending spree? Can you tell us what was required and what they submitted?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First of all, I would just hope that the Leader of the Opposition is clear about what he did yesterday. By his reckless accusations, he's ruined the reputation of two people, Mr. Atma Singh Gill and Mr. Atma Singh Gill, whom you claimed were basically Liberal insiders. You've also ruined the reputation of the seniors' club of Brampton because you didn't take the time to look at the fact that sometimes people have the same names. How can you stand in your place and accuse us of not doing our due diligence when you clearly did not do your due diligence by smearing two families and the seniors' club of Brampton?

Mr. Tory: I suppose the difference is that when I made a mistake, I got up in the House and apologized for it, which is more than you've done. You've taken, as part of this program, hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money and given it out to people without asking any questions and with no application forms. You picked these people personally. So at the end of the day, there is a difference. We're waiting for your apology to the taxpayers.

We know from the Premier's statement this past weekend that you didn't have a lot of time to make these decisions. The year-end March madness rush prevented you from exercising the care you should have exercised. We know from your own statements earlier this week that you didn't have time to put these grants out for any kind of proposal call, so there was no time to do a proper check. So I'll ask the minister if he's aware of the fact that in the 1990s, the federal government revoked the charitable status of this very same organization for failing to file tax returns. You would have found that out if you'd done any checking at all. Are you aware of the fact that they had their charitable status revoked and that you gave them all this money without

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question's been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we on this side of the House are proud of the fact that so many newcomers have come to this province, and they've come under great duress. So many of them are living below the poverty line—a 30% higher poverty rate amongst newcomers than there is in the general population. Many of these newcomers come from the South Asian community. I will tell the Leader of

the Opposition that I have never been so impressed by the volunteerism, the generosity, the love of Canada by these newcomers who are members of the Sikh temples. They are proud Canadians and they are so generous, yet they need a helping hand. That's what we've tried to do in each one of these cases. We've reached out to these newcomers who are having a great deal of difficulty reaching a level of income—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tory: The minister continues day after day to miss the point. We all share in the joy of these people who have come to Ontario and the contribution that they're making. What we're talking about here—

Interjections.

The Speaker: This could be a long afternoon. We need to allow members to place their question and we need to allow ministers to respond.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: What we're talking about here would apply whether we were talking about an environmental organization, an arts organization or a tenants' group. The bottom line is that when you have the responsibility of government, you have the responsibility—which I believe all members in the Legislature share, quite frankly—of properly safeguarding the taxpayers' money.

1440

I have an article from the Toronto Star from 2002. It says this very same organization was one of three in 2002 that was caught issuing improper tax receipts to its donors, eight years after having its charitable status revoked by the federal government.

Again, my question to you is very simple. You handed out a big quantity of taxpayers' money to this group. I don't know whether you have any understanding as to how this looks: that you didn't check, that there was no application, that there was no interview, that there was no selection committee. Did you do anything before you handed out the money to a group with this kind of history? Did you bother to check?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we are looking, whether it's a Sikh temple or a mosque or a synagogue or a secular Red Cross food bank in a basement, to partner with them because they are involved in the same goals of inclusion, of helping newcomers.

In this case here, this was a registered charity, 2005. It was part of the same major gurdwara on Derry and Dixie—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Colle: —on Pape Avenue. So they are essentially the same kind of outreach function where they have soup kitchens and much volunteerism. Sometimes even political parties and big corporations have problems with their charitable status and getting their paperwork done with Revenue Canada. We can't condemn this volunteer organization. They are registered and are trying to do their best.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: This is again for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He continuously and deliberately

mistakes the fact that anybody is condemning these organizations. We're condemning your government for a complete, absolute failure to safeguard the taxpayers' money, to exercise even the most basic level of care.

Yesterday we asked about the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, which has been embroiled in a court case regarding disputes about their bookkeeping and their failure to keep proper financial and corporate records. They received \$250,000 from your slush fund. Five of the 10 board members, it appears, have connections to the Liberal Party.

The Premier says we should be cutting you some slack because you had to make some very difficult judgment calls. You must know how bad this looks, how any reasonable person would think the shortage of paperwork, i.e. no paperwork, and the surplus of Liberals make it look in terms of what happened with taxpayers' money.

My question is this: Will you agree to full co-operation with the Auditor General so we can come clean and get to the bottom of this? Will you agree?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, taxpayers' dollars have to be spent prudently. Taxpayers' dollars also have to be invested, and not just talked about, with our newcomers. For 20 years, we've had these incredible, generous, hard-working people coming to Ontario. They have been ignored. We believe as a government, whether it's the Khalsa Darbar on Derry and Dixie—as I said yesterday, I wish that every member in this House would come with me to Derry and Dixie Road and see the spirit of volunteerism, the spirit of charity. They may not look like people at the Albany Club, but they are great Canadians.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Northern Development. Minister of Energy. Member for Niagara Centre.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We'll wait.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: Nobody once yet, I don't think, in this entire discussion has called into question the generosity of spirit or anything else of these organizations. What we've—

Interjections.

The Speaker: When I sit down, it doesn't mean everybody can make as much noise as they consider possible. We're going to continue and we're all going to remain in here. We're going to do it in a way that respects the institution.

Mr. Tory: We just have to look at the record here. The Bengali group got the money after a meeting was arranged by the former Liberal cabinet minister Maria Minna. The Iranian-Canadian cultural centre, registered as an animal welfare group, got money after being a registered charity for only three weeks, and all seven of its board members are donors to the Liberal Party. We have the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, with half its board members with ties to the Liberal Party.

Those are judgment calls, as the Premier said, that you made. It reflects badly on you, it reflects badly on all of us, and, frankly, it reflects badly on these groups, which

might well have qualified if you'd bothered to have a proper process to safeguard the taxpayers' money and let them put their case forward.

If there's nothing to hide, then why don't you stand up here today and indicate you will fully co-operate with the public accounts committee and the Auditor General in getting all the facts on the table on these grants and getting to the bottom of this and clearing the air? Why don't you just stand up and say that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the point is that whether it's the Khalsa Darbar or the Afghan Women's Association, these are incredible, hard-working people. When I went to the Khalsa Darbar, I didn't go around asking the thousands of people, "Which party do you belong to?" I saw the volunteers cooking in the basement. I saw the volunteers handing out food. I saw them with their children. I also heard from them when they said, "We are reaching out beyond the temple. We want the rest of the GTA and Peel to come to the temple to learn more about what we are like and what our religion is like. Could you, as the government of Ontario, do anything to help us become more integrated with Peel, Mississauga, so that we can be fully participating Canadians?"

Mr. Tory: The minister continues to entirely miss the point, which is that there was no process by which you ever bothered to ask what they were going to do with this money. There was no process by which you checked on what they did with the money. There was no process by which you checked on the background of any of the people involved in any way, shape or form. You just sent the money out the door to people you picked based on—you didn't even tell anybody this money was available.

You want us to somehow believe that everything is okay because from now on there's going to be an application form. But the minister will still make the decisions. It won't be at arm's length. There will be no mechanism like the Trillium Foundation or like your own newcomer settlement program where people look at this stuff. For years this has been going on. What needs to happen is some real change. We need the Auditor General's and the public accounts committee's help to change the way we safeguard the taxpayers' interests.

All I'm asking you is, will you completely co-operate with the public accounts committee and the auditor to get to the bottom of this and make some changes so we can tell the taxpayers we're looking after their money properly? That's all.

Hon. Mr. Colle: It just strikes me as strange. I remember when that party there got \$3 billion for the 407 when it was valued at \$12 billion. Remember? There wasn't five minutes of scrutiny over that \$10-billion or \$12-billion giveaway. There was no examination; there was no discussion. Yet if the Korean women's association is to get \$50,000 to basically get a new kitchen table and fix their toilets, the opposition leader is here going through everything of this \$50,000. Where were they when they gave away the 407? No debate, no paper—they gave it away.

Interjections.

1450

The Speaker: Order. New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I will not warn the Minister of Economic Development and Trade again.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, community organizations receive government funding to help them provide important services to Ontarians. In order to receive government financial support, these organizations must complete detailed formal applications, they must detail how the funding will be used, and they have to adhere to rigorous deadlines. That is how accountability and transparency are ensured. Minister, why does your year-end slush fund money fail on each one of these measures of accountability and transparency, and how do you justify that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I guess I'd like to ask the leader of the third party how he justifies slamming a newcomer settlement services organization yesterday, which his party did, that has been receiving funding from the NDP, the Tories and our government. In fact, the president of the Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services Association says:

"I correct Mr. Prue's suggestion. As a card-carrying member of the New Democratic Party"—and this is from Angela Connors, the president of this organization—"his assertion that there is a connection between our agency and the Ontario Liberal Party is offensive to us. We expect a full apology from the New Democratic Party."

Will you apologize?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, this is not about organizations; this is about your failure to provide a program which has the adequate accountability and transparency—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I will not warn the Minister of Natural Resources again.

Mr. Hampton: The reality is, for most federal and provincial programs, voluntary sector organizations have to provide extensive information about their governance structures and their financial status, and they have to show the capacity to actually deliver the services that they're being funded for. But, Minister, your year-end slush fund has none of these requirements tied to it.

Why have you cheated so many excellent, legitimate cultural organizations out of the chance to apply for this funding while some fly-by-night organizations with Liberal connections have gotten a cheque with no questions asked?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I can wait.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the leader of the third party doesn't have the guts to stand up and apologize for what he has done to a non-profit organization that has been there for over 25 years. It's also interesting that the leader of the third party calls the United Jewish Appeal a fly-by-

night organization. He calls AWIC Community and Social Services fly-by-night.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the minister. Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: If I can continue with what he calls fly-by-night: CultureLink does incredible work in Parkdale. The Jamaican Canadian Association, which for years was starved of government money, he calls fly-by-night. He calls the Halton Multicultural Society fly-by-night. He calls Frontier College, which has been in existence—this is the best one of all. Frontier College has been in existence since 1898, doing incredible work in literacy in his own riding for decades. That's what he's trying to do, because he's picking and choosing and saying that these volunteer-based organizations are, to him and to the NDP, fly-by-night—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, a well-developed and rigorous evaluation and auditing process is key to transparency and accountability. Most voluntary sector organizations that receive government funding have to pass auditing and evaluation tests. They have to prove that the money they receive is used for what it was intended for.

Minister, why are there no auditing or evaluation processes for the organizations that received money out of your year-end slush fund? Can you provide people with a full accounting of how the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre used the quarter of a million dollars that you advanced to them at year-end?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, many of the organizations and institutions that received this investment—as I said, we, as a government, felt these investments were long overdue—have long-standing relationships with our government. In fact, the ones that I have just mentioned have been partners with us under our newcomer settlement program, and we keep on working—we've worked with them for over 20 years.

Now, there are sometimes new, emerging organizations that have been ignored and never listened to for years. They couldn't even get a phone call returned from the NDP. We have to understand, as I said at the beginning, that for too long many newcomer groups and emerging organizations have been totally ignored. They said, "When do we start getting help? We waited five years, 10 years, 15 years. When can we get partnership from government?" So some of the newer organizations we've also tried to help, along with, you know, Frontier College, United Jewish Appeal. We have helped the older ones plus some of the new ones.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: Speaker, since we're not getting any answers from the minister, we'll try the Premier. Premier, your minister has a problem, and the problem is this: He's responsible for a year-end slush fund that stinks to high heaven in terms of its transparency and its accountability. There are no formal application processes, no criteria, no accountability, no transparency. Hard-working cultural organizations have not been funded, while

organizations that were created three weeks before they got the cheque but are very Liberal-friendly got a quarter of a million dollars.

Premier, my question is this: Are these the standards that you set for your cabinet minister? Are these the standards of transparency and accountability that you set for your government?

1500

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): In an effort to smear us, there are some unfortunate casualties who are being caught in the crossfire. I want to bring to the attention of the leader of the NDP once again a press release that was just issued by the Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services—just issued. The headline reads, “NDP Challenge of Social Services Agency Integrity False.” It goes on to say, “The Ontario NDP has questioned the integrity of Peel’s largest social services provider, that serves 50,000 newcomer clients each year, says ICNSS president Angela Connors.” Those are the president’s words. She goes on to say, “Any allegation or suggestion that Mr. Delaney, in whose riding one of our locations is situated, was involved with this grant is completely false.”

Mr. Prue’s suggestion, “His assertion that there is a connection between our agency and the Ontario Liberal Party is offensive to us. We expect his full and public apology.”

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you may not like it, but this is about your government’s lack of standards, lack of transparency and lack of accountability.

I know organizations around this province that desperately need \$200,000, \$250,000 of funding so that they can carry on their very excellent community work. But they will also tell you that when they apply for funding, they have to go through a long, formal application process. They have to show evidence of good governance and financial status, they have to show that they actually have the capacity to deliver the service, and they have to show that their books have been audited and that they’ve passed other evaluations and tests.

The question is this, Premier: Why is your government, the McGuinty government, handing out cheques of \$200,000, \$250,000, to organizations that haven’t met any of these tests and appear to be very—

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Once again, they’re right back at it. Notwithstanding the fact that an organization is beyond reproach, received 77% of its funding from the federal government, is over 21 years old and serves 50,000 immigrants in 35 different languages, the allegation was made in this House yesterday by one of their members that the only reason that organization got any money was because Bob Delaney’s partner is the executive director of that organization.

We hear today from the president of the same organization: “I correct Mr. Prue’s suggestion as a card-carrying member of the New Democratic Party,” said Ms. Connors.” She says, “His assertion that there is a con-

nection between our agency and the Ontario Liberal Party is offensive to us. We expect his full and public apology.” It’s one thing to stand in this House and deliberately try to defame one of our members, but there are innocent bystanders who are being hurt in the process, including this wonderful organization—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I won’t warn the Minister of Energy again. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: To you, Premier: When are you going to apologize for your government’s running a year-end slush fund?

A respected journalist came here from the Iranian-Canadian community yesterday. He warned the Minister of Finance that something doesn’t look good here. He warned your office. He warned the Minister of Citizenship. He said this person’s organization was only given charitable status three weeks before the grant, they have no connection to the Iranian-Canadian community, they refuse to answer questions from other activists in the Iranian-Canadian community, and yet they got a \$250,000 grant from the McGuinty government, no questions asked. Premier, when are you going to apologize to the people of Ontario for running a year-end slush fund that has no transparency, no accountability and seems only to have given money to a Liberal-friendly Liberal Party activist?

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We obviously have a different perspective on these groups and the valuable work that they perform on behalf of, not just their own immediate community members, but indeed the good work that they do to enrich our province both economically and socially.

The leader of the NDP not only questions the funding that went to the ICNSS, the Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services group, which has been performing valuable work for 21 years in Peel, but he is also opposed to the money that we’ve sent to the Afghan Women’s Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization, to the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum, to the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, to the Filipino Centre, to the Flemingdon food bank, to the Korean Canadian Women’s Association—

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. Here’s what you said in response to the auditor’s report this past December: “Everybody should get a sense of responsibility, and understanding that, we have to be very careful when it comes to how we deal with taxpayers’ money.”

Premier, I’m the MPP for Richmond Hill. I was never contacted by the minister to advise me that the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre was applying for funds. I was never contacted by anyone in the ministry to ask my opinion as to whether or not it would be appropriate. And I was—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): They’re shouting down legitimate questions. That’s the strategy, shout it down—

The Speaker: Member for Leeds–Grenville. I won't warn the member for Leeds–Grenville again.

Mr. Klees: Premier, as the member for Oak Ridges, representing Richmond Hill, I was never contacted by anyone to get my opinion as the member as to the appropriateness, and I was never advised that the grant was issued. Do you not consider that it would be appropriate for the sitting member of the riding to be contacted and, at the very least, advised that the grant was in fact issued?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I will ask the members of the official opposition to take a look at the two gentlemen above me in the public gallery. There is Mr. Atma Singh Gill, who is on the federal Liberal riding executive, and there's a second Mr. Atma Singh Gill, who's on the board of directors for the seniors' centre, the International Seniors Club of Brampton.

Now, yesterday, the leader of the official opposition said that the only reason that this volunteer organization received money, the International Seniors Club of Brampton, was because one of the directors, Mr. Atma Singh Gill, a volunteer, was also on the board of the federal Liberal executive. You can see, Mr. Speaker, behind me, these are two separate gentlemen. In one fell swoop, the leader of the official opposition yesterday maligned the reputation of both these gentlemen, as well as their volunteer organization. I will now ask Mr. Klees, on behalf of his party, to apologize to these gentlemen and to that organization.

Mr. Klees: The leader of the official opposition has, in fact, already apologized. What the Premier has not done is responded to my very specific question as a member of this Legislature and as the member who represents Richmond Hill. Do you not believe that it would have been appropriate for the minister to contact the member to get the member's opinion—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Labour, I won't warn you again.

This is going to be a very long afternoon. I would ask members on all sides to realize where we are, who we represent and why we're here.

Member for Oak Ridges.

1510

Mr. Klees: As a member, I've been involved in helping people make application to the Trillium Foundation and many other government grants. There is a process; I have been involved. The Minister of Health Promotion has the good sense to advise me when he provides a foundational grant for the riding. Why is it that this minister ignores a sitting member, ignores the fact that the sitting member should have some respect in the matter and at least bring him into consideration? Premier, I ask you, is that not appropriate?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Is it any wonder that new Canadians are bypassing the Conservative Party and going directly to the Liberal Party when it comes to having their needs assessed and met?

I'll say again as well that yesterday, because of what the leader of the official opposition did, the media took him at his word, so that this organization, the International Seniors Club of Brampton, which has been maligned by the leader of the official opposition, appeared in print in Canada's largest daily. I would expect that the leader of the official opposition will make a formal apology that would appear in print in that same newspaper, that he would attend at the International Seniors Club of Brampton and apologize formally to the volunteers who devote themselves to the good works that they do there, and, finally, that Mr. Tory would also extend an official apology to the other Mr. Atma Singh Gill, who's a member of the federal Liberal executive.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, Ontarians are absolutely concerned that your end-of-the-year slush funds were doled out in such a big hurry that you established no formal accountable application process. But what Ontarians want to know now is, what has happened to the money that you doled out?

Iranian community journalist Saeed Soltanpour came here yesterday to seek answers. He didn't get any. You refused to account for the \$200,000 you gave to the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre for the protection of animals. Can you tell this House what this Liberal-friendly group did with the money that you have now given them for 13 months?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, that member should stand up on his feet and have the backbone to say that he made a mistake yesterday, that the association in Peel that received that funding was one of dozens of NSP partners that have had a long track record of great work in newcomer communities. If he cannot stand up and apologize for putting a bad light on a member of this Legislature, at least have the fortitude to recognize the 25 years of good work that that organization has done in Peel.

Mr. Prue: Another complete non-answer from the minister.

Minister, we have established that the ICC is made up of you and your finance minister's friends and supporters. We have confirmed that this money was doled out to them. Ontarians want to know what was done with the year-end slush fund money you handed over to them. Will you tell us what they're going to do with the money, or do you have the intestinal fortitude to ask that it be given back to the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Taxpayers' dollars are very important and they have to be invested properly. What we are trying to do—and I hope the member opposite appreciates the fact that many of these organizations, for many, many years, have never had any support. We have now made sure that there is support for them. We are investing in their hard work. We are going to continue to do

that. Yes, the process has to be made better. We've now put up a direct application for capital funds so that there will be a more direct application process. That's going to be on the website Friday. That's why we're improving that, because the need is growing, and it has been unmet for dozens of years. We are trying to meet that need of inclusivity and diversity enhancement all across the province.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Energy. When we came to office, the energy sector was in a shambles. No new generation had come online, no new transmission was being built, and conservation wasn't in the previous Harris-Eves Tory government's vernacular. Thanks to the McGuinty government, we're moving forward to right their wrongs. Clean and renewable generation is coming online, transmission is being built and we're creating a culture of conservation.

I know that we're all too familiar with how the NDP makes things up when the facts don't suit their political needs, but this time I think they've gone far too far. Minister, I hear that the NDP are trying to make people believe that we have a plan to bring a transmission line through the heart of the city of Toronto, down Pape Avenue, as part of our plan to bring system stability. Minister, is that true, or are the NDP just making this up, as usual?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The member is right: No government has done more on conservation, energy efficiency or energy renewables than the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government.

The member for Toronto—Danforth, along with the leader of the federal NDP and a city councillor, put out a flyer that they're circulating, saying that a \$600-million high-voltage transmission line is proposed down Pape Avenue into the port lands. That's completely false. It's inaccurate, false; it has never appeared in any formal or informal government document. I want to be parliamentary: It is devoid of fact; it is devoid of integrity; it is devoid of any sound policy planning involvement. It is, to put it mildly, fear-mongering. It's a crock.

I say to the member opposite: We have to work to ensure the reliability of power to Toronto. This kind of fact-devoid fear-mongering is false. This is not going to happen, and you should apologize to your constituents for—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Duguid: I have the same notice here, and it's very clear. It says, "A \$600-million high-voltage transmission line is being proposed down Pape Avenue into the port lands. What will the impacts be on our community and families?" It's very clear what they're trying to do here, and I've seen this before when I was at the old city of Toronto as a city councillor. I've seen this tactic: When you can't dispute something that the government is doing, you make something up, you rile up your com-

munity and then you pretend that you're going to go to bat for them and fix the problem.

It would appear that the NDP has nothing to offer in terms of ideas and energy except a desire to play politics with it. Minister, while the NDP play politics, can you outline how the McGuinty government is making progress on the energy file?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The NDP government cancelled all conservation programs in Ontario. That party has put out a piece—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need to be able to hear the minister.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: It is a brochure that's devoid of truth, devoid of fact, devoid of any background.

The other interesting thing: They attribute the fact that the Markham 24-kilometre high-voltage transmission line didn't proceed. They're right; we cancelled it. It wasn't the right solution. It was the right solution for Markham not to do it.

1520

I would urge the member opposite—and I certainly hope you're not using members' budgets to do this—at the very least not to put out false information to your constituents while you're trying to—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would urge that information that's devoid of fact not be put out under your letterhead, sir, because it's false. You shouldn't have done it.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration with respect to his political slush fund: There is no application process. There was no rating whatsoever of projects. There was absolutely no public knowledge that your slush fund existed. You are running a political slush fund that would make Chuck Guité blush. Minister, I'll ask you one thing: Why don't you do the right thing? Why don't you come clean, call in the public auditor and let him look at these projects, because otherwise—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We can wait.

Member for Erie—Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Minister, why don't you do the right thing? You don't want to be the next Gagliano of the Liberal Party in the province of Ontario. You don't want to show up with the next Guité within your ministry staff. Minister, why don't you do the right thing? Call in the auditor, let him have a look at the reports and get to the bottom of what you did with hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Education will come to order. Minister.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Again, that member there sat in a cabinet that gave Paul Rhodes one million dollars in contract to OPG, Hydro One. Tom Long was paid I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of dollars by Hydro One. They, again, gave away a \$12-billion public asset, the 407, without any scrutiny or any paper. This is the government that basically wouldn't let the Auditor General look at Hydro One, OPG, and this is the government that orchestrated the Magna budget. That's what he was part of.

Mr. Hudak: Absolutely unbelievable, that kind of a garbage answer. Taxpayers were—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I need to be able to hear questions put and responses given.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Again, I would remind members where we are and why we're here. I need your co-operation.

Member for Erie-Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: The minister knows that the list of these projects, the connections to the Liberal Party—it's not what you do; it's whom you knew in the Ontario Liberal Party. I know this minister doesn't want to be known as the son of Guité, as a second coming of Chuck Guité here to the Ontario Legislature.

Minister, when you see the connections to Liberal candidates, to Liberal Party presidents, you know that taxpayers across this province are damned mad about your use of their taxpayer dollars for political purposes. Why don't you clear the air, get out of the gutter, answer my question and tell us when you're going to call in the Auditor General to get to the bottom of your political slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is a party that never questioned the expenditure of billions of dollars—in the last month of the campaign, billions were going out the door, yet they never even mentioned the word “immigration” in this House in eight years. There was only one time they ever referred to immigration in this House, yet when we invest in newcomers, when we invest in volunteers who were ignored by that government for nine years, they now question those investments. That's the double standard that you have to answer to.

The last thing I'll say is that I think you should respond to Mr. Gill, who said, “It is my hope that I will visit this Legislature. Yesterday's proceedings in the Legislature made me reconsider whether I committed a crime by becoming an active member in the political system in this province after being a proud citizen in this great country for 15 years.” Your leader accused that volunteer organization of being connected—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding of Parkdale-High Park is the most ethnically diverse of any riding in Ontario, and yet it continues to be overlooked and underfunded by your government. I

have met with countless new immigrant community groups that desperately require funding. They're all doing excellent work to help new immigrants settle in Ontario. When I spoke to them, they did not know of any application funds, and none of them received a quarter of a million dollars of last-minute largesse. I'm speaking about the Vietnamese Women's Association, the Parkdale Intercultural Association, the Canadian Tibetan Association—I could go on; there's about 12 of them. Minister, if you can't stand up for all new Canadians instead of just Liberal supporters, why won't you resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We're the government that ensured that all newcomer organizations across the province would share in \$920 million from the federal government. Maybe the member opposite should talk to CultureLink in her riding, which has now received a 30% to 50% increase in funding for those programs because of our hard work that flows directly into community organizations right across the province. There are many organizations across this province that were underfunded. Now we have dramatic increases in funding for all of them.

We are also trying to meet the new capital capacity which has been ignored for 30 years. We're proud to invest in the growing capital capacity, and that's why we've now added another dimension to investment on the capital side with a direct application online.

Ms. DiNovo: I spoke to CultureLink last night. They were unaware that there was \$20 million available to them. They were unaware that there were application forms for such a process.

As the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, you're responsible for supporting all vulnerable new Canadians. However, the evidence clearly shows that you only give last-minute largesse to groups that are supportive of the Liberal government, even if they're not known in their communities. Minister, if you can't support all new immigrants equally, why don't you resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: For the first time in 15 years, all of the newcomer settlement partners received money so they can upgrade their facilities. That hasn't been done in 15 years. They're all eligible and they got this upgrading money. Many of these organizations now have increased operating capital, which they never had before, because we stood up for them to get the federal money they were owed. We have never seen this much investment in immigrant aid services in this province in 20 years. We're proud to make those investments and we're proud to continue to expand capacity. We're going to make the system even better because the need is great, and it's great all over this province.

1530

TOURISM

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I have a question for the Minister of Tourism, but before that, I just want to take the opportunity to welcome the delegation from Niagara that we have with us in the House

today in honour of Niagara Week here at Queen's Park. This is their third year coming here to work with us in partnership to help to grow a tremendous Niagara well into the future.

I think you know already in this House how blessed Niagara is, with some of the best soil on this planet and a microclimate second to none in this province and in this country for growing tender fruit. We've been long famous for our peaches, our vineyards, our wine industry and our tourism industry, and I know that our government has been working tremendously hard with Niagara to help build an infrastructure to support that.

One of the things that our Minister of Tourism has spearheaded and I'd like him to talk a bit about is culinary tourism, which is something that's been expanding around—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I would like to thank the member for her question and certainly her dedication to the Niagara Peninsula. I want to join her in welcoming the delegation from Niagara that is here again this year. This is the third year the delegation has come here. They speak as a unified voice and make some good points on behalf of the region, and get responses from this government.

As the member mentioned, culinary and wine tourism is a growing phenomenon around the globe. Here in Ontario we have all the ingredients to make it one of the top culinary tourism destinations indeed in the entire world. That's why our government has launched the culinary tourism strategy, which is a 10-year plan to make Ontario a leader in culinary tourism. Since the launch of this strategy, culinary regional committees have been formed in five key regions, including Ottawa, Muskoka, Toronto, Prince Edward county and Niagara.

In Niagara, we have the great wine route, which lures people from one of the seven wonders of the world to the gates of Hamilton. Our scenic vineyards and top-notch wineries are all part of—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary. The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I think it's very exciting that our government has recognized the importance of culinary tourism to the Ontario economy, including its importance to my riding of Niagara Falls and the entire region.

As has been mentioned, this is Niagara Week, and I too want to recognize the delegation that is here. I can't mention everybody's name, but I would like to mention my mayor from Niagara Falls, Mayor Ted Salci, and, in the members' gallery, a regional councillor, Barbara Greenwood, newly elected. Welcome.

My riding is dependent on the day-to-day traffic from the United States. Visitors from across the border drive to my area to enjoy the wonderful culinary and wine experience the region has to offer, as well as to visit our two casinos and to spend time at our new convention centre that will be opening.

Minister, I understand that you were in Washington yesterday talking with officials from the Department of Homeland Security about the proposed passport requirement. Can you update the House and the people of Ontario—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I certainly can. The discussions were very productive. You'll remember that initially there were people who said, "You should simply comply with the regulations suggested by Homeland Security and not try to buck the trend," and we in Ontario thought it was important to look for an alternative. So in our submission we asked that they make an exemption for those under the age of 16.

Interjection: We got it.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: We got that exemption. We asked for an exemption for those between the ages of 16 and 18 involved in groups going to such things as hockey tournaments. We got that.

You kept hearing all the negative responses out there that somehow the position of Ontario was not going to be realized. In my meetings yesterday in Washington, representatives of the Department of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State agreed to Ontario's plan to provide an alternative—that is, an existing document which most people would have: the driver's licence—to enhance the security on that, and that indeed that could be one of the solutions to this problem. So Ontario's position—

The Speaker: Thank you.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, I hope you would bear in mind your Premier's throne speech and what he said about accountability and the promise to adhere to those principles when you answer your questions, which you have not, as of yet.

Minister, regarding the Liberal Party slush fund, you have said previously that this money came out of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Will the minister please tell us what conversations he had with the Liberal Party campaign chair, who also happens to be the Minister of Finance, or conversations at a staff level about this Liberal Party slush fund?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The conversations I have are with the people at the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre. I have conversations with the people who work at the Jamaican Canadian Centre. I have conversations with the North York Community House. I have conversations with the incredible people at SISO in Hamilton. I ask the member to come with me and have some conversations with those incredible people. That's who I have my conversations with.

Mr. Yakabuski: So much for principles and accountability. We all know what those promises mean from a Liberal government.

It's clear from your previous statements that the Liberal Party campaign chair had a hand in this in some manner. We just want to know what it is, and it certainly looks fishy when one of the people connected to one of the groups that got money out of this Liberal Party slush fund donated hundreds of dollars to the Vaughan–King–Aurora riding association, the home riding of the Liberal Party campaign chair.

We want the minister to clear it up for us. How precisely did it work? Did the minister of Finance or his staff contact you and pick which groups were going to get the money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the member from the opposition still hasn't learned his lesson. His leader yesterday falsely accused a citizen of somehow doing something wrong. He still doesn't get it.

What we have done right across this province—we have gone to help organizations that are sometimes small, sometimes large and some organizations that are quite large—sometimes having Tories that have donated to the Conservative Party. We don't say to those organizations that you're disqualified because your board of directors is made up of people—we don't even ask that. But we know those organizations want to do good work. We support that, and that's what we are dedicated to.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question, again—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Minister, you haven't answered any question, but here's a real simple one for you. You claim that your slush fund is transparent and that all grants you have made are posted on a website. Would you please tell this House, and tell everyone in this province, on what website or where else you have posted the \$200,000 you gave to the Iranian–Canadian Community Centre?

The Speaker: The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member opposite still hasn't stood up on his feet and apologized for the fact that he has called one of the most reputable newcomer agencies in Peel a disreputable fly-by-night organization, by him and his party. He still hasn't done that.

Our investments in organizations, big and small, have been good investments, because they serve the issues of diversity, inclusion and also the celebration of our heritage. Those are the kinds of investments we've made. The people across Ontario want us to partner with these organizations. They want us to make the system better too, and we are doing that with the on-site registry.

We're working at it, because there is a great need that has been ignored, as I said, for too long.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: It is no wonder the minister can't answer this simple question. Mr. Minister, the list of slush-fund grants from March 2006 has disappeared. It's no longer on your website, it's no longer on your ministry's website, and our own legislative library cannot find it. How can you say that this is a transparent process when you won't even reveal where the money is going and you won't even tell the people of Ontario and this Legislature how they can find out?

1540

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've made those lists available; in fact, you were at an announcement where we invested \$200,000 in the Afghan Association of Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Colle: He was there with me. All of these are available. We made it available to the media that have asked. These investments have been made right across Ontario and they're investments that have been celebrated as good investments—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I was having great difficulty hearing the minister. Minister, if you wish to—

Interjection.

The Speaker: New question.

CITY OF WINDSOR

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Last week, I heard reports that the Financial Times of London, a very reputable publication out of London, England, has ranked Windsor as the number one small city in all of North America for foreign direct investment. Needless to say, I was absolutely thrilled at the thought of our area being bestowed this great distinction.

Minister, I know that you will be able to confirm these reports for me and let me and our constituents know that the Financial Times of London has indeed voted Windsor as the number one small city to invest in.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): We know that the member from Essex is a huge booster of the Windsor–Essex region. In fact, the London Times FDI magazine published yesterday indeed ranked Windsor as the number one small city for future investment, and we are very proud.

Let me tell you exactly what they said—and special congratulations to everyone in that area: “Windsor, in the Canadian province of Ontario, ranks as North America's leading small city of the future, scoring well for business friendly policies and a strong development program that includes several large-scale projects” involving both the public and private sectors.

To everyone affiliated with Windsor and Essex county, we say a hearty congratulations, and special

thanks to all who worked so hard to achieve those investments for the city of Windsor.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is a registered charity and private police force autonomously enforcing federal, provincial and municipal animal laws under the provincial animal act without any type of provincial oversight or accountability mechanism in place; and

"Whereas in 2006 resigned OSPCA director and treasurer Garnet Lasby stated, 'Government, not the humane society, should be in charge of enforcing laws to protect animals and to prosecute offenders'; and

"Whereas in 1989 the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) formally requested the province remove police powers from the OSPCA; and

"Whereas in 2006 the Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC) stated, 'The number of questions and complaints from the farm community about specific cases and the current enforcement system continues to increase'; and

"Whereas the Animal Care Review Board, a tribunal staffed by volunteers, is the only OSPCA appeals mechanism available outside the court system; and

"Whereas the OSPCA recently received \$1.8 million from the province and is lobbying for additional long-term stable funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to ensure that members of the Animal Care Review Board tribunal are adequately trained in accepted provincial livestock practices and have some legal training to rule competently on issues brought before them; and

"(2) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to investigate the resignation of 29 OSPCA directors (including the chair and the treasurer) who in May 2006 urged 'the province to step in and investigate "insane" abuse and animal cruelty charges'; and

"(3) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to appoint an ombudsman to investigate allegations of abuses of police powers against the OSPCA."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have several petitions here and I think I'll read this one.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

I agree with this petition, sign it, and send it to the table by way of page Brendon.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have two petitions today from the citizens of Newmarket, Holland Landing, Aurora and Richmond Hill to regulate zoos to protect animals and communities:

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is

present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common 'dry' type and the 'wet' type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

"Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

"Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service."

I'm pleased to support this and provide it to Dillon to present to you.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition is forwarded to me by Mr. Jesse Flis and was signed by members of Cardinal Wyszynski Council #9296. According to Mr. Flis, there are thousands of these petitions being collected from other councils and parishes across the province. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

As the proud proponent of this bill, I am pleased to affix my signature and hand it to page Salena to present to the Clerk.

1550

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition entitled "Raise the Minimum Wage.

"Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

"Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

"Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario's working families earn a living wage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP's living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour."

I agree with this. I'm signing and sending it to the table by way of page Lauren.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I affix my signature and support the petition.

MULTIPLE LEGAL PARENTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the appeal court of Ontario on January 2, 2007, ruled that 'a child may have more than two legal parents';

"Whereas that sets a precedent and leaves many unanswered questions which could result in possible multiple legal parents and unknown devastating ramifications to children and families of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to appeal the Ontario Court decision so that various levels of government may thoroughly study the personal, societal and legal implications of allowing more than two legal parents."

I have signed this, Mr. Speaker.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition signed by many people from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly

"Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I affix my signature to support this.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to read into the record a petition that was delivered to me by Melissa Tkachyk. It relates to the regulation of zoos to protect animals and communities. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

PASSPORT OFFICE

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas, at present, residents of Barrie and surrounding area must travel to Toronto to receive a passport; and

"Whereas the only service available to obtain information or make application for a passport in the city of Barrie is through the post office or through the local MP office; and

"Whereas a passport to travel is now becoming a way of life for Canadians and there is a great need for a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie; and

"Whereas, due to the growth in population and demand and necessity for a passport to travel, a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie is essential; and

"Whereas, due to the current security enforcement in place, a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie is essential; and

"Whereas a full-service passport office would be beneficial not only to the residents of Simcoe county but also Parry Sound-Muskoka region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the federal government to give consideration for a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is from the Saint Athanasius Anglican Church in Orillia. It has to do with affordable housing.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 122,000 households across Ontario are on waiting lists for affordable housing, enduring wait times of five to 10 years;

"Whereas housing affordability problems are worsening in Ontario, with one ... household in five paying at least 50% of its income on rent, and almost 65,000 facing eviction in 2005 because they couldn't afford to pay their rent;

"Whereas Ontario's current social housing stock is increasingly rundown, with tenants forced to endure degrading conditions, including mould, cockroaches and mice; and

"Whereas the cost of ignoring the plight of our poorly housed and homeless neighbours affects all citizens of Ontario through increased health costs, emergency shelter costs and other public expenditures;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure there is a major allocation of funding for affordable and supportive housing in Ontario's 2007 provincial budget, with a commitment to release this funding quickly; and

"To urge the government of Ontario to reassume financial responsibility for the cost and repair of the current social housing stock which was downloaded onto municipalities, who cannot afford repair and upkeep costs."

I'm pleased to sign this and give it to Marissa to present to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER ROADS FOR A SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 VISANT À CRÉER DES ROUTES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS SÛR

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 23, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Further debate? Sorry; my peripheral vision isn't—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): That's fine, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Northumberland.

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to take a few minutes to speak about Bill 203, about our Safe Roads for a Safer Ontario Act. Let me first say that in general we probably have some of the safest roads in North America. When you talk about the complexity of our road networks that we have, especially around larger urban centres—for example, in southern Ontario, where there's an enormous amount of traffic. When you look at the corridor between Toronto-Montreal, Toronto-Niagara, Toronto-Barrie, they certainly are highly used highways. But this goes beyond the highly

used highway. It goes beyond the roads that you and I and most members in this House use on a regular day.

1600

One of the things we see all the time is that it doesn't matter how safe or how cautious you and I are when we're driving. The thought behind our minds is that it's always the other person next to us, behind us, in front of us or coming towards us we have to be careful of. Unfortunately, most of us have only two eyes and sometimes those two eyes might not be 100%. Having said that, we always have to be on the lookout. I guess we introduce measures to help us be on the roads in a safe manner, so that when we leave home in the morning or go to our offices or our places of work, we expect to go back to our families, to our kids and our grandkids.

I've had discussions with the minister and the minister's staff over the course of the last few months—and this is going into last year—when they were putting this bill together. I must commend the minister for the amount of work that she and her staff and her ministry did, because I know that I was part of some consultation to get our input: what it was like in the world that Lou Rinaldi drives in every day or when he's on the road, or his family. An awful lot of work went into this, and there's certainly been a lot of thought behind it.

As we move forward, we hear about the unfortunate incidents. We should not tolerate drinking and driving. I know that in the past, through no fault of anybody, there was more tolerance when it came to drinking and driving. Although it was not acceptable, society sort of turned a blind eye 20 or 30 years ago. It was the macho thing to do. But we realize today, with the type of equipment we drive on the road and the volume of folks on the road, that does create a challenge. So we need to reinforce or make new rules to help us make those roads safer.

One of my sayings is that driving is a privilege. If everybody in this province, in this country, in North America, obeyed all the rules of the road, we'd probably save a pile of money in policing or those kinds of support services. Unfortunately, we cannot depend on that, so we clearly have to give those law enforcement folks fairly tight rules when they patrol our highways. When we talk about drinking and driving not being acceptable, drinking and driving is not acceptable, because in many cases, when we read an article, a person who was probably intoxicated and was involved in an accident, as much as you hate to say it, sometimes doesn't suffer the consequences of somebody that they caused the accident with, some innocent bystander, whether they're just crossing the road or driving another vehicle. I don't think anybody is against providing those measures for the safety part of it.

The other piece that I've heard about in this House for the last three and a half years, over and over again, is street racing. Back a few years ago, I must admit that I was one of those folks who liked to soup up cars a little bit. I think most of us did. We showed off sometimes. But, truly, that's not acceptable for a number of reasons. As I said before, we have a lot more sophisticated

equipment like the nitrous oxide that's available today, which certainly enhances performance to a great extent. You can buy little modules, little chips that you put in your computer that control the fuel and air mixture in cars, which enhances performance. Back in my day, it was a matter of getting a little drill bit. I'm sure you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, drilling those jets a little bit bigger so they could use a little bit more fuel and give us a little extra zip. That's not to say that was acceptable; all I'm saying is that we're so far advanced that, like any other technology today, it creates more problems.

I hope this is not a conflict, but I have been involved in racing for a number of years, but not on the streets. There are places across Ontario like the facility that my family has, all different types, where true enthusiasts who want to race—places where it's a safer environment; it's controlled. I think that's the type of thing that we as citizens or as legislators—if people want to have performance cars, we should encourage them to go to appropriate places. There are locations, although not that many, where they can perform, whether it be road racing, drag racing, oval racing and those types of things. I think that's another sector of our road safety that we cannot ignore.

I heard in debate in this House the other day—I think it was a member of the opposition—the type of technology that's out there right now; that people who perform racing on the streets create huge hazards. When they are street racing, they are thinking about either one or two competitors who are going head to head but they forget about other folks: the families who might be going for a Sunday outing or going out at night for some kind of recreation, or somebody who basically left home to go to work and either on their way to work or on their way home, through no fault of their own, might not make it home. And in some cases, if they do make it home and they have injuries, they are huge injuries. They are injuries that bring a lot of suffering to those families.

The member opposite, Mr. Klees, has been a strong advocate of introducing private members' bills. I need to congratulate Mr. Klees for being forward-thinking. That was one component of how we can improve road safety.

As we look through the bill we also want to be able to, for example, make police officers maybe more noticeable, to allow police officers blue and red flashing lights on their vehicles. It's a combination that has been proven to enhance the visibility of the police. Along with visibility, as I said before, give the police or the law enforcement folks the tools required for automatic suspensions, automatic confiscation of those vehicles and automatic roadside suspension of licences, along with appropriate penalties that truly deter folks from doing illegal acts on the road.

Having said that, I think we need to move this piece of legislation forward. From what I hear in the House, there is general consensus that we all support this. We've waited a long time, so it's time to move forward.

Thank you very much for allowing me some time to put my thoughts on this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Northumberland. He took me by surprise. He ended a little early. Usually he goes on beyond the time the clock allows, but today he must have some important engagements or something.

As you know, we're substantially supportive of this bill. I'm going to give my colleague from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, a lot of credit for pushing this bill forward, at least the portion of it that deals with street racing. I know this is an issue that Mr. Klees has been passionate about throughout his time here in the Legislature. No one has spoken more clearly and consistently about the need to deal with the scourge of street racing on our young people, and the needless and senseless deaths and injuries that occur as a result of it.

1610

One of the amendments that my friend from Oak Ridges has proposed is an amendment dealing with nitrous oxide and its accessibility within the vehicle—that it would not be available for either the driver or the passenger to activate from within the vehicle and that the connection would be visible to the police as well—so that we could eliminate the use of this substance which enhances the performance and horsepower of a vehicle. We would at least have that tool in the toolbox to deal with that substance. That would be one more thing to discourage our young people from engaging in such a dangerous and senseless activity as street racing.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my friend from Oak Ridges for his diligence and drive in bringing this issue forward.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I look forward to speaking for a while on this bill. Of course, we in the New Democratic Party are definitely in favour of stronger restrictions against those who choose to drink and drive and of course the extremely dangerous practice of racing as well. In fact, the term "racing" rather glorifies this activity. I know that "extreme driving" has been the term used in the safety community, and that's the one that I think I'll stick to. I know, from my own experience as a rural pastor in Huron Perth Presbytery, that every year we saw children die drinking and driving. As a rural pastor, you're intimately involved with those families and the tragedy of what ensues, so certainly I look forward to speaking about this.

Really, I'll be speaking about how to possibly strengthen this bill in terms of amendments and some of the questions it raises that we need to develop answers for, particularly around the area of enforcement. It's one thing to write a piece of legislation; it's another thing to actually make sure that it's enforced out there, as we all know. So I'd like to also talk about enforcement, the police aspect of this. Of course, it also reflects some of the federal legislation on this as well.

Finally, I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about education, because it's one thing to enforce and be punitive, and it's another thing to prevent. Hopefully every-

one watching this and listening is involved in that. There, it would be wonderful to have some of the stakeholders present and get their input into ways in which perhaps we could assist them in preventing both extreme driving and drinking and driving, before they result in the death that I think inspired this bill.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I apologize for my rough voice. I'm just recovering from a very nasty bout of that virus that's going around, but I did want to get on the record.

I'll be speaking a little bit more later on this evening, but I wanted to make mention of the fact that I unfortunately had to meet the mother of Matthew Power. Adrienne Seggie is the mother of Matthew, who was killed in Hamilton, through no fault of his own. For the purposes of edification, he was actually just walking across the street and was an unwilling victim of the stupidity of street racing. This young man was 21 years old. He was just crossing the street and absolutely was not one of the people who were watching. He actually was just simply crossing the street in Hamilton, and the next thing you know, this car comes just barrelling down the road and snuffs his life out.

As you can appreciate and understand, his mum was absolutely devastated. To sit and meet with his mum, to see what his mum wanted to do, was so rewarding for me on a personal note. Here is this woman who has lost her 21-year-old son to the stupidity of street racing, and she wanted to talk to me about forming a march and continuing to Ottawa to talk about Criminal Code improvements.

I just wanted to put on the record that I'm so enamoured with this woman's fortitude, her desire, and what's in her heart, to see things improve so that it doesn't happen to another child or another young adult. So I compliment her. I've worked with her in terms of what we should do and in terms of how we organize the walk. Unfortunately I couldn't make it to the walk, but I support it and offered her petitions. My heart goes out to her and the rest of the families that have been devastated by street racing through no fault of their own. I'll speak more to that later on.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech of the member for Northumberland on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007. Of course, a large part of this bill was derived from the member for Oak Ridges' private member's bill. He's going to be the next speaker on this bill, so we'll certainly look forward to hearing his comments. I know that he is hoping to have some amendments to do with, I think, aftermarket products to do with street racing brought forward to improve the bill.

Certainly the member for Oak Ridges has been very busy. He has a private member's bill this time to do with organ donations, which was receiving public hearings last week, and it will have clause-by-clause this Thursday. As this bill is supported by all three parties, hopefully that organ donations bill, which I think makes a lot of sense, will also receive the support of all three

parties in this Legislature. It seems obvious that all three parties support this bill. It will strengthen the rules to do with drinking and driving so that between .05 and .08 blood alcohol, you then start to receive, I think, for the first offence a three-day suspension, then seven days, then 30 days, and then you have to move into education, and eventually a six-month period with an ignition interlock device, which originated from another private member's bill, that of the member for Simcoe North. With that ignition interlock device, you have to breathe into some pipe before the ignition on your automobile would work. These are all improvements to help make our roads safer. I think all three parties support it. Certainly the member for Oak Ridges will have some comments that will be worth listening to coming up next. Otherwise, we should move on and get this bill to committee and make some amendments to it.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Northumberland, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rinaldi: First of all, let me thank the members for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Parkdale–High Park, Brant and Parry Sound–Muskoka for their comments on my thoughts on this bill.

It is obvious that in this Legislature we all played a role in trying to develop a piece of legislation that truly addresses a need in the community. There's no question about that, and credit needs to be given where credit is due. Let me tell you, I am impressed by hearing people from every corner of this House. They've been very supportive. I think this is probably the first time in three and a half years that we are in unison. I'm not saying we agree 100% to everything but I think it's very important to recognize that.

As we move forward with this legislation, I'm sure when it goes to committee and clause-by-clause there will be equal co-operation to make sure that at the end of the day it really addresses the needs of our road safety to the best of our ability, and to keep that in mind. I'm confident that as we come to the end of this session of Parliament, we will have a much stronger bill to deal with road safety. I know that our government would be proud of that achievement. I'm sure that all the members of the House will be proud to be part of achieving that.

I look forward to further debate from other folks in this House, obviously in support of this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate on this bill. I'll say at the outset that I congratulate the government for coming forward with this bill. I want to thank the member for Northumberland for his acknowledgment of my role in advocating over the last number of years, really, to ensure that we have legislation in this province that will speak very clearly and send a very strong signal that the activity of street racing will not be condoned in the province of Ontario, and that for those who do, there will be significant and very meaningful consequences. We can't legislate responsibility, but what we can do—and I

believe we have a responsibility as legislators—is to ensure that there are consequences for irresponsible actions. That has been my thrust in wanting to bring forward legislation that will send a very strong signal to people that racing in and of itself, if you want to participate in that sport, as the member from Northumberland indicated he does—that there's a time and a place for that. And it's certainly not on our public roads and highways.

1620

I have a number of very good friends who are car enthusiasts. In fact, as a former Minister of Transportation, I recall well that when we were contemplating this legislation, I met with a number of stakeholders from the after-market industry, for example, who convinced me, as a result of those consultations, that we should modify what we had in place at that time as draft legislation and focus even on the nitrous oxide aspect of the bill—which ultimately was tabled as a government bill—in such a way that it not be outlawed from use in the province, that there are legitimate places where it can be used, and that is in a controlled environment on a race track. But it should not be connected on our streets and our highways.

That's why, as the member referenced earlier, I will be looking forward to this bill moving on into committee so that we can then contemplate an amendment that I will be presenting that will very specifically deal with the nitrous oxide aspect of this issue. For those who are observing this debate and who perhaps don't understand the technology, I want them to fully understand that there are those enthusiasts who, by virtue of installing a nitrous oxide component in the car, significantly enhance the horsepower of what is a normal vehicle on the road. I will be moving an amendment that will read as follows—and I want to read this into the record. I want to give members opposite an opportunity to contemplate the proposal. This is taken directly from my private member's bill as it was written there. It reads as follows:

“No person shall drive or permit to be driven on a highway a motor vehicle equipped with a nitrous oxide fuel system unless,

“(a) the part of the nitrous oxide fuel system comprising the canister, bottle, tank or other store of nitrous oxide is completely disconnected from the other parts of the system;

“(b) the disconnection can be observed by looking at the interior or exterior of the motor vehicle; and

“(c) the disconnected parts cannot be reconnected from the driver or passenger seats.”

The next provision relating to this is also stated in the amendment. It reads as follows:

“A police officer exercising his or her powers under section 82 may take or cause to be taken a sample of any substance from a motor vehicle to determine whether or not the motor vehicle contains nitrous oxide.”

Then there's a reference to the seizure empowerment of the front line-officers so that they can effectively deal with this. It states as follows:

“A police officer exercising his or her powers under section 82 may,

“(a) remove nitrous oxide, or the part of the nitrous oxide fuel system comprising the canister, bottle, tank or other store of nitrous oxide, from a vehicle and dispose of them, or cause their removal and disposal, at the cost and risk of the driver and owner, who are jointly and severally liable; or

“(b) order the driver or owner of the vehicle to remove nitrous oxide, or the part of the nitrous oxide fuel system comprising the canister, bottle, tank or other store of nitrous oxide, from a vehicle and dispose of them appropriately.”

I wanted to make that point with the government because I do believe it is the one failing of the legislation, and I'm hopeful that we'll have the support of the minister and of government caucus members when we go to committee.

I'd like to provide some context as to why I became involved as assertively as I did on this issue, and I want to focus my comments relating to this bill—I know it's considerably broader than just street racing, but my interest stems from the fact that as transportation minister I was faced, at that time, with the reality that far too many deaths had occurred throughout the greater Toronto area and in fact across Ontario as a result of the irresponsible activity of street racing. I became convinced as minister that in a road safety bill we should incorporate a very specific provision relating to street racing, and it was. It was incorporated in a bill that I tabled in May 2003. That bill was interrupted, as you well know, by a provincial election. Following that election, I did not have the privilege of sitting in cabinet. I wrote a very nice note to the new Minister of Transportation and left it on my desk at the Ministry of Transportation to wish him well and also pointed out some unfinished business that I had left in my bottom right-hand drawer. This bill was part of that unfinished business, and I encouraged him to proceed with it.

The minister did reintroduce the road safety bill, but for some reason that I could not understand, the provision relating to street racing was left out of that bill.

It was in the following year that a very tragic event happened in my riding. Rob and Lisa Manchester were killed in an accident—

Interjection.

Mr. Klees: Speaker, I would ask that you deal with this, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Could the member come to order?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Whisper, then.

Mr. Klees: I would ask the member for his co-operation. Thank you.

I'm referring to the deaths of Rob and Lisa Manchester in my riding, who were the innocent victims of a street racing accident. They left their seven-year-old daughter as an orphan. That caused me to revisit this issue because I realized that as long as there is no signal from the government of this province to young people who may consider this a sport they can engage in and

aren't forced to consider the consequences and aren't told that there are going to be serious consequences, there may well be many more deaths.

So I drafted a private member's bill to incorporate the very precise provisions that were originally incorporated into the government bill and introduced it here. Unfortunately, we did not have the support of the Legislature at that time. I moved a unanimous motion to have that bill considered before we recessed for the summer. The urgency that I felt at that time was, I didn't want us to go into the summer without having something on the books that would send that signal to people that there's a serious danger in street racing. We did go through the summer and, as you know, there were a number of tragic deaths that ensued that summer as a result of street racing.

My colleague made reference to a tragic event in Hamilton. Adrienne Seggie—I participated with her in that press conference here in Queen's Park that I sponsored, welcomed her after she had made her walk from Hamilton to Toronto. From here, she went on to Ottawa to impress on legislators there the importance of dealing with this issue.

1630

Mr. John Hickey supported me as well in my efforts relating to the private member's bill. Mr. Hickey participated in a round table that was then hosted by the Minister of Transportation, to her credit, to solicit input from stakeholders as to what we should be doing relating to legislation around this issue. Mr. Hickey's daughter, Allison, is still not the person that she was. She suffers terribly from the results of the injuries that she incurred. Her fiancé, Mark Radman, as well continues to suffer as a result of the very serious injuries that he incurred as a result of the irresponsible actions of a street racer.

Twenty-one-year-old Matthew Power is no longer with us. His mother, Adrienne, expressed her agony and wanted to let us, as legislators in this building here, know that there is urgency to this.

It's unfortunate that those injuries and those additional deaths had to take place. We don't know, if we had had legislation earlier and if there had been a strong signal from government, whether or not any of these deaths or injuries could have been prevented. We don't know that. But I will say this in looking forward: I thank the government. I thank the Minister of Transportation for having brought this legislation forward. We now have legislation that sends a very clear signal to young people or anyone else who might engage in street racing that there will be serious consequences.

Consistent with my private member's bill, we are empowering, through this legislation, front-line officers. If they have any reason to believe that a car was involved in street racing, they are empowered, on the spot, to suspend licences and to impound the vehicles. That is so important, because what happens—and people say, "Why the impoundment? Why is that important?" It's very important, because we have the evidence then of the vehicle so that the proper inspection can be undertaken to deter-

mine whether or not, for example, there has been an alteration of that vehicle, if in fact there was nitrous oxide involved. We can determine the condition of the vehicle. I think it's important as well that individuals, on the spot, are forced to lose their licence. Especially for car enthusiasts, to lose their car sends a very clear signal. For many of these young people, their car is probably one of the most important possessions that they have, if not the most important. So to send a signal that they will be relieved of that possession I think simply puts in place the necessary consequences for individuals who would participate in that activity.

One of the areas that I am also concerned about, and I want to call on the government, because I see nothing in this legislation that addresses this and I heard nothing from the minister or the Premier when the announcement was made that would lead me to believe that there are plans for a broader education strategy: I think it's very important that, coupled with this legislation that puts in place consequences, we also have in place in this province a very strong education and information program that raises awareness of the consequences of street racing not only to the individual who might be found guilty of that, but to potential innocent victims. In the same way that the government has invested a great deal of resource in the issue of drinking and driving, and the minister responsible for health promotion is investing considerable government resources in advising people how important it is to look after their health—and I support that—I believe it's equally important that the Ministry of Transportation set aside resources so that we can, at a very early stage throughout our education system, begin to educate young people about the importance of road safety.

As Minister of Transportation, I was proud to invest \$50,000 in the Community Safety Village in York region. If you go there today, there is a Ministry of Transportation house there that allows young people to become familiar with the rules of the road. That investment was authorized when I was the minister. It was my privilege to do so, and every time I go to the Community Safety Village—and there are now literally thousands of students who go through that place every year, and they learn about road rules and road safety.

I believe it's important that some resources be dedicated specifically to this issue of street racing, particularly when we get to the years where a young person is about to get their licence. We all remember what that was like. The first time we get behind the wheel of a car, and especially the first time we get behind the wheel of a car without anyone else there, it's exciting. I look at the pages here and I see them smiling, because they're looking forward to that day. Right? Well, when you do that, you want to be very careful and understand that it's a responsibility that you have. Having a driver's licence is a privilege; it's not a right. To keep that privilege, you have to keep the rules of the road. You have to respect how important it is not only for your own safety, but for the safety of others on the road.

So, in closing, I want to address a plea to the Attorney General, and that is that while we now have the legislation in place that provides consequences, I would ask the Attorney General that he send a very clear signal to his crowns across the province that under no circumstances will we allow a plea bargaining away of the consequences that we have taken the time, as legislators, to put on the books. One of the problems that we have in this province and in this country is the revolving-door justice, that even though someone gets caught and gets convicted, the consequences are plea bargained away, so that there are really very little consequences. That's what encourages people to simply go out and do it again.

We have excellent legislation. It will be excellent when we get the amendment. I look forward to supporting it. I look forward to working with the government to put the final touches on this bill. We need the legislation in place, we need the education to ensure that individuals understand the importance and the consequences, and finally, we need a court system that is going to support the legislation that we have taken the time in this place to implement.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. I thank members here for their support of this legislation. As the member for Northumberland said earlier, it's not often in this place that we find common ground on legislation. This is one of those. I believe we have reason to celebrate as a result of this legislation that we've all had a part in bringing to this place.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I just want to comment on some of the aspects made by the previous speaker.

I think one of the things that we need to keep in mind is that it's not just a question—I'm talking about the drinking and driving side of it—of drinking and driving. It's also a question that there's a whole whack of people—we were just talking about it earlier—out on the streets who basically have suspended licences and are still driving. It is a huge problem, the number of people who are driving while under suspension. And the other issue is the number of people who aren't insured.

So I just raise this in the context of this debate because it in itself is problematic. We have situations where the motoring public or pedestrians or whoever might be involved in some type of accident with somebody who's not insured, which I think is a huge problem. It seems to me that at one point we're going to have to put our heads around this whole issue of people who are not insured.

1640

On the issue of drinking and driving, it will be interesting to see what the courts do when this legislation gets finally passed, because it's skirting a fairly fine line when it comes to what you're able to do vis-à-vis these types of charges. I think we all agree on the principle of drinking and driving, that nobody should do it. Certainly, society has become a lot better over the years. I grew up at a time—and I think most of us around here did—when it was almost commonly accepted that people drink and

drive. I remember instances—and we probably all remember the same thing—where the police officer would pull over somebody who was drinking and driving and drive the person home and tell him not to do it again. Well, you're not going to see that in this day and age. So society has come a long way in saying that drinking and driving is not tolerable.

This particular legislation goes another step in order to send a very serious message to people who have the privilege of driving—I say “privilege” because that's what it is; it's not a right—“If you're going to do so, you have to do so with responsibility to not only yourselves and your passengers but to the motoring public.”

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Oak Ridges. I'd just like to say that his support and leadership earlier on this issue is helpful. We both attended a meeting that Donna Cansfield, the Minister of Transportation, set up on November 21, 2006, a round table on street racing.

I would just like to go through a list of the people who were there: MTO legal; the Ministry of the Attorney General; Transport Canada; the Ministry of Health Promotion; Mr. Bell from the Ontario Modified Vehicle Owners Council; John Bondar from the Canadian Automobile Sport Clubs; Stephen Grant of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police; Constable Kent Taylor from the Ontario Provincial Police, and the list goes on. We had the RCMP, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Driving School Association of Ontario, the Ontario Safety League, the CAA. The member of provincial Parliament for Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, John Hickey, a street racing collision victim's father, and Bill Brack and Bert Coates of Bill Brack Advanced Driving Academy were there. And the Minister of Transportation was there to open the session.

We went through that very carefully because it is such an important issue. For the member for Oak Ridges, the tragedy of Rob and Lisa Manchester was obviously a reason to move this forward. So I am very pleased to see that the three parties in this House want to get this legislation out there as quickly as possible and are going to work with us to do that. We'll make sure that we have a good bill. The street racing part did have the benefit of input from about 20 experts early on, so I think we have a good piece of legislation here, and thanks for the support from the other parties.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I certainly want to commend the member from Oak Ridges for his debate in this particular area. The bill is about road safety. We have major problems in this province with respect to road safety, I think in part due to the gridlock we find around the GTA in terms of people wanting to get from point A to point B. People are not patient, they drive carelessly, they drive in a manner that puts other people at risk, and there have to be consequences.

I spoke to the member for Timmins–James Bay in terms of dealing with people who drive out there without any insurance, people who drive with no licence or who

have had their licence suspended up to 12 times—there have been cases reported about that—the lack of respect in the situation in terms of being able to operate a vehicle, and the sense of entitlement that everybody can operate a vehicle even if they're not being responsible with respect to having a licence or insurance.

There's no doubt that street racing has been an area where there's just total irresponsibility: people looking for areas, for roads where they can basically speed and race their cars. They really don't have a lot of respect for the public, whether it's at a certain particular time of the day when they feel they can race their cars, whether it's in Toronto, Hamilton or other areas.

I think it's important that this has finally come forth. There's been a lot of urging for the bill to come forth, and it certainly deserves public hearings to make sure that this step goes forth properly.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's not only a privilege and a duty but also, I think, a heavy responsibility to speak about Bill 203, Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario.

I can recall, for example, in my days of training at the University of Toronto medical school, that one of our rotations was doing clinical neurosurgery at the trauma unit of Sunnybrook Hospital, and I remember that that was my first deep encounter with motor vehicle accidents. The number of individuals who had succumbed, who had been injured, who had lifelong brain injuries, incapacitations and disabilities—and of course, at the time, I myself was often in the same age bracket as these young men and women who had been injured in this manner. It was a very impactful and I would say resonant experience.

Now that I find myself here in the Legislature, 20 years later and counting, I think it is very apropos and really my responsibility, and almost a sense of closure, that we would bring forward legislation that is so tough on drunk driving, on street racing and on declaring the presence of our police forces.

I can recall, for example, getting close to the families of particular victims and realizing that all their ambitions and aspirations for them, for their young lives, had essentially been snuffed out.

Therefore, I would commend my colleague the Minister of Transportation, Donna Cansfield—who is of course immediately to the south of me, the proud representative of the riding of Etobicoke Centre—for this legislation, for these initiatives, for the tough, I would say, deterrent effect, and for the signals it sends to Ontarians about these issues.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Klees: I want to thank my colleagues for their comments.

In closing, I want to finally express my appreciation to the many people who have encouraged me in my advocacy. I want to thank, of course, John Hickey, the father of Allison Hickey. I want to dedicate this to Allison, and to Mark Radman, her fiancé, as well as to Rob and Lisa

Manchester, in their memory, and to their surviving daughter, Katie.

To Adrienne Seggie, I want to thank her for her courage and determination in ensuring that the death of her son Matthew Power does not go unnoticed. I want to say to her that for all of her determination, through her walk from Hamilton to Queen's Park and on to Parliament Hill, she should take a great deal of encouragement knowing that she has been heard and that, in memory of her son Matt, action has been taken by this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. DiNovo: I look forward to speaking about this bill. Again, we in the New Democratic Party support anything that's going to keep drinking and driving from happening and anything that's going to take extreme driving off the roads. We're not talking about a great number of deaths—there have been about 35 since 1999—but every single one of those deaths represents a loss of a story for an individual and incredible grief for that family.

I know this. We also in my family have lost those in traffic accidents. I'm sure that, as I speak, many who are listening and many around Ontario have also lost family members in traffic accidents. Perhaps what I'd like to do is start off with mentioning one of them, because I hope this was part of the inspiration for this bill. That was Tahir Khan, who died in January 2006, a taxi cab driver just doing his job. It points out the real danger of extreme driving. Often those who do extreme driving or racing don't realize they're putting other lives at risk, not only those who are taking part in extreme driving but those who just happen to be innocent bystanders. Tahir Khan was one of those people.

1650

I remember Mayor David Miller said, "Being a cabbie in the city is a tough job. You do put your own personal safety at risk.... He came here, like so many Torontonians, to give a chance to his family." He also went on to talk about the dangers. At this point Mayor Miller said, "I hope this tragedy sends a very clear message: You race cars, people can die."

For the remaining members of Khan's family, who were bereft of a person who is irreplaceable to them, and to all those families who have lost someone irreplaceable, my condolences, my prayers go out to them.

In my two-minute hit the last time I stood up, I started talking about my own experience at Huron Perth as a country pastor, and certainly this is the experience of many of our rural pastors. One of the horrible duties of a rural pastor is to bury often teenagers, often young people, who were drinking and driving. Anything that's going to prevent that tragedy is certainly welcomed. This bill, we hope, will help in that regard.

My comments are really more about strengthening certain aspects of the bill, about perhaps putting forward some questions that government members might want to answer before going to committee. I would love to hear from stakeholders. First and foremost among them, Mothers Against Drunk Driving comes to mind, which, if

not solely responsible, certainly spearheaded the move way back when to begin talking about this as a crime and doing something about it.

Bill 203, just for those who are listening and perhaps don't know the details of this bill, increases authority to govern and impose fees for administration, impaired driving and road racing. In addition, there is authority to impose consequences when fees or penalties are not paid. There are, however—and here's a first flag—exemptions from payment for certain conditions and circumstances.

These are questions that I would love to have answers for from the government side: What are the consequences and how will they be enforced? What are the exemptions and what criteria will be used to determine the right to an exemption? An interesting question.

Bill 203 goes on to provide for increased roadside suspension of licences of impaired drivers. Police can stop vehicles and do a breath test with an approved and calibrated screening device or instrument. If a blood alcohol concentration, as we're used to it, of .05 or above is detected and indicated by a "warn" or "alert" diagnosis, the roadside officer can suspend his or her licence. The blood alcohol threshold for suspension has been reduced from .08 to .05, effectively, with this piece of legislation.

Also, previous suspensions will not be considered if they occurred five or more years previous. The officer may also impound the vehicle of an impaired driver at the expense of the owner of the vehicle. There is no guarantee of conviction even after the third suspension—so there's a question. There's no certainty that a repeat offender will lose driving privileges. So the question here is, how many repeat offences are necessary before harsher consequences are legislated into place?

Also, what if they disarm or override the ignition interlock that is talked about in this and get someone else to do the breath test, for example? Another question that is left as a question and not really answered by the legislation. Hopefully, in committee, these questions will be answered or at least dealt with.

Again, consequences for repeat offenders, increased penalties, enforcement, and a really critical one, which always plagues legislation of this kind, which has been seemingly hastily drafted: Where will the funding come from to implement the enforcement that this legislation calls for?

Finally, we have left to regulation by the Lieutenant Governor administrative fees for licence suspension, exemptions from payment, establishing conduct review programs, fee for conducting the review programs, exemptions for persons from those street racing or extreme driving requirements with "prescribing conditions," and the definition for what is a "race," "contest" and "stunt" with respect to street racing. So certainly some committee work needs to be done to fine-tune this legislation to answer those questions and to deal with them.

I did pick up this quote from the Toronto Sun. This is just this month from a parent who has a tragic story of her own. Her son, Matthew Power, 21, was run over

while crossing a Hamilton street last November. Adrienne Seggie says about this legislation that she believes the legislation was rushed in an election year to appeal to voters, and said the government should have taken the time to draft a more proactive bill. "'I don't feel it's enough because the police still have their hands tied,' she said." Again, another red flag upon what is contained in this legislation and perhaps ways that we can strengthen it, we can give more meat to its bones.

I also want to look at enforcement. This is, I think, the critical aspect that I'll dwell a little bit on, the enforcement of this legislation. I had the privilege of doing a drive-around with 14 Division, one of the police divisions in my riding. Superintendent Ruth White, a wonderful superintendent of that particular division, allowed this to happen. It was incredibly eye-opening and tremendously frightening. As any member here knows who has done drive-arounds with police in their division, but perhaps particularly in the inner-city, downtown area, of which Parkdale-High Park, my riding, is part, again, it can be terrifying.

We drove around, and I was only in the car for a few hours. In the police car you will notice that there's a computer and that the computer flashes, certainly, red signals for those crimes in progress and then others. They're not crimes in progress but still situations that need a police officer at hand. I was driving around and seeing all of these red lights flashing. I said to the sergeant who was driving me, "When will you get to this one?" or, "When will you get to that one?" He said, "Well, we have 20 cars on the road tonight for 100,000 people, so maybe in an hour, maybe in four hours. Some of them may be tomorrow morning." To drive around with police in that situation, to see what they engage in day in and day out, to see what we ask them to do without a lot of support, as I say, can be very terrifying. My husband, as I mentioned before in this House, was a police officer for a brief period with Waterloo regional and certainly had his eyes opened by the experience.

That's the situation right now. I know that this government has talked about adding to the community police forces with another 1,000 police officers. I know that in my riding it's trickling down at a very slow level. We certainly haven't seen our complement of those police officers for community policing, and we certainly do need them.

Now, you can imagine that in the situation that we're already faced with, we're adding here with legislation like this a more onerous duty: yet more duties for our police officers to fill, yet more paperwork, yet more arrests that need to be made, and then, going down the road a little bit, yet more cases to an already overrun court system. You heard the member from Oak Ridges, and I was most interested in what he said to say. The last thing that we all want to see is plea bargaining happening and plea bargaining away some of these charges. Without funding, without an increased police presence, without some of the machinations that will put teeth into this bill, I fear that it won't be enforced with the rigour, really,

that we're asking for here. Certainly, that's the major comment that I have on this.

I notice that my colleague from Niagara Centre also brought this up. He said, "Let's make it very clear that this does not create a new offence here in the province of Ontario. Section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act has been in existence for years and years and years. Again, the language used in this bill is very consistent with the language that historically was used in section 172." He goes on to say that it's almost impossible to apprehend those who engage often in extreme driving. They're taking off at huge speeds. The police are often left with those who are simply really witnesses to the crime rather than the criminals themselves. So this is putting, again, our police officers, particularly those who are on our highways, in both dangerous positions and positions, again, where they're already overworked and they don't have the backup necessary to chase after somebody in an extreme driving situation, and driving some of the incredibly high-powered cars. There's another instance where, again, this bill might be strengthened, in looking at exactly the kinds of cars and the kinds of motorcycles that we allow on our roads. Really, one might ask oneself, why is it necessary to go at the speeds that these vehicles can go? It certainly invites the misuse of them. Again, it's an onerous task to ask our police officers to engage in, a dangerous task, one for which more funding and more officers are needed.

1700

I'm going to leave some time on the clock for my colleague who is here this evening as well. Suffice to say that for any of us—and I certainly appreciated not only the comments from the members for Oak Ridges, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Northumberland, Brant and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but particularly those from the member for Etobicoke North, because I too know what it's like to walk with a family into an emergency room, a family that is about to lose a child or that has just lost a child. For all of those out there whose job takes them into those dark places, we hope this legislation brings a little bit of light.

It needs some work. It needs strengthening rather than anything else. It needs some input from stakeholders. The questions I've posed need to be answered. But by and all, we should be doing everything we can in this Legislature and in this province to end both extreme driving and drinking and driving. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to respond on our safe driving bill to the comments from the member for Parkdale–High Park, and I would like to add my recognition as well for the member for Oak Ridges—we don't often agree—for the work that he and Minister Cansfield did to bring this bill in to deal with the whole issue of street racing.

The member from Oak Ridges, in his remarks, mentioned Rob and Lisa Manchester, who lived in his riding and were tragically killed. They were innocent bystanders, driving down the street. There was an accident

and they were killed by street racers. It just happens that Lisa's parents actually live in my riding; they are long-time residents of the rural part of my riding. In fact, Jack Cote, her dad, was a teaching colleague of my husband's at the Ontario Veterinary College. So it's interesting how one tragic event can touch a number of us.

Clearly, the tragedy of losing a daughter, losing a family member, is not going to be fixed by legislation, but I think what this legislation does is offer a chance, insofar as provincial legislation is a possibility—because criminal penalties, of course, are a federal responsibility. What we can deal with here are Ontario Highway Traffic Act offences. But what we are doing in this bill is bringing in very serious consequences for people who participate in street races: heavy fines, impounding of the car and suspension of the licence. For somebody who's a car nut, those are all very serious consequences. I believe this legislation will get the message out: Street racing is not acceptable.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member for Parkdale–High Park on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act. The member talked about her personal experiences of dealing with the tragedy of street racing and of drinking and driving in a very personal way.

This bill has all-party support. The bill would strengthen the rules to do with drinking and driving. It would bring in many changes that would affect street racing. As previously mentioned, the member from Oak Ridges' private member's bill was really the origin of a good part of the street racing part of it. As he mentioned in his comments a few minutes ago, he has some amendments that he would like to see to do with nitrous oxide and after-market modifications to vehicles that are used in street racing. And as the member for Guelph–Wellington said, the seizure of a vehicle is a very powerful tool to discourage or stop street racing from happening. But all the changes in this bill—I think the strengthening of the drinking-and-driving rules and the changes to street racing—will help to make roads in Ontario safer.

All three parties are supporting it, so I think we should get this bill off to committee and make the necessary amendments to improve it.

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): In this particular round of comments from myself on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, I want to pick up on the comments that many are making this afternoon about street racing, and the type of street racing that I'm somewhat unfamiliar with—I've learned more about it from the press and the discussion here—doesn't seem to be an overriding problem in my area in terms of this changing of the automobile to race. That's not to say that we don't have street racing problems in my riding, but this notion that someone actually goes out and enhances a car or a vehicle, whatever it might be, purposely to street race seems to me to be very premeditated.

Therefore, I'm pleased that we have a seven-day vehicle impoundment, should this bill pass, a seven-day

licence suspension, increasing the fines from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and court-ordered suspensions. That shows that this Legislature and all three sides of the House who are supporting this are adamant that street racing and, as I say, something that seems to be premeditated be met with stiff fines and stiff sanctions.

I also mentioned yesterday that this bill would allow police officers to use blue and red flashing lights. I find it amazing, the people who come to me and say, "Pat, I didn't see that police car. I didn't see that emergency vehicle." I had a bill here that would enhance bus safety, and people came to me and said, "We didn't see the school bus." My goodness, what are people thinking about? In terms of lighting on police cars, they're lit like a Christmas tree now. This will enhance that, I'm sure, and I look forward to the bill's passage so that we can make our roads even safer here in Ontario.

Hon. Michael Chan (Minister of Revenue): I'd like to comment on the two points brought up by the member from Oak Ridges. One concerns the enhanced speed equipment on a car and the second point he raised is about education and information.

I agree with the first one, but then let's understand that a car does not race. It is the people driving the cars that make cars race. I strongly support the member from Oak Ridges' proposal to have stronger education and information on this bill.

My former job was in the insurance business as an insurance broker for 31 years. I still remember those days when I was selling insurance and an existing customer called my office and tried to add a young driver to their policy. My requirement was that the parent had to bring in that particular young driver to talk to me and I will tell them how to drive a car, about safety out there, no drinking and no racing. My point is education, giving information to drivers, especially young drivers.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Parkdale-High Park, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. DiNovo: I listened with interest to the Minister of Revenue and the members from Guelph-Wellington, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Chatham-Kent Essex. Thank you all for your input.

My comments really focused on some flags that need to be looked at around this bill and some questions that need to be answered to strengthen it. I'd just like to reiterate that one of those is around enforcement, around supporting our police as they try to enforce this. You can imagine, if you're a highway police officer and the extreme driving—I'll use the term that's used by the safety community—that's happening in front of you, they speed away, and what you are faced with. Are you going to chase them? Often their car is a lot more powerful and faster than yours. What are you going to do? How are we going to support our police in enforcing this? Then how are we going to support our court system in terms of the numbers of cases that are coming through already, the backlog of cases? We're going to be presenting them with more cases. And again, I'm supportive of this bill, absolutely; I want to make it stronger. So how are we

going to make it stronger? By looking at the enforcement angle.

1710

Also, in the last minute left to me, what are we going to do about education? I didn't have a chance, really, to speak about that before. We want to look at it, here in the New Democratic Party of Ontario—all of the education that goes into correcting the behaviour that results in extreme driving, and also corrects the behaviour that goes into drinking and driving.

I speak, as I said, from personal experience of actually burying children who have died drinking and driving on rural roads, and would hope that nobody has to go through that experience, particularly, of course, their families. So let's strengthen everything that there is to do with this bill, as well as enact legislation. Let's make sure that the legislation can be enacted. Also, let's look at our educational systems—what we're telling children, what we're showing children, what children are exposed to—so that this doesn't happen to them.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Levac: One of the most difficult things in the world to do is to tell a parent why their child died. One of the most difficult things in the world to do is to even understand the position that that person takes when they ask why this happened to their child, when it shouldn't have happened. We're talking about those specific things today. That's why I'm very supportive of this piece of legislation.

I guess there are a couple of questions we need to start asking ourselves: Is this going to solve the problem of street racing? Is this going to solve the problem of drinking and driving? Is this going to solve the problem of people doing illegal things to their cars to make them faster? Those are the kinds of questions that have to float out there.

Almost every single member so far—I think, to a person, every single member so far—has talked about something that I call the cultural change. The fact is that drinking and driving was an absolute in this province in years gone by. It was an absolute. As a matter of fact, when people got caught drinking and driving through a serious accident or causing death, they chose juries when they went to court. Do you know why they chose juries? Because those 12 people sitting there were, on Saturday night, in the same condition that that person was in when they got caught. It was rare—and I did some research—that they would get convicted, because the 12 people would say, "That was me, so I'm not going to convict them. I feel badly about what happened, but I'm not going to convict them." Then what happened? We went through a cultural change. Do you know who did that? Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Mr. Bisson: Among some.

Mr. Levac: Among those who decided that that was enough of this happening, they went to Legislature after Legislature, committee after committee, Senate hearing after Senate hearing in North America. They went all over and they held up pictures of their dead children, and

they said, "A drunk driver used a 2,000-pound car, got themselves so inebriated they didn't even know who they were, and killed my child." Lo and behold, it stuck. People began to realize that the culture was no longer going to be tolerant of this situation. So Mothers Against Drunk Driving and other organizations began to say, "It's time for us to change the norm," because in fact that was the norm: You packed away alcohol, you got into the car and you drove. So society collectively said, "It's changing." They changed the culture.

We need to change a culture here. We're starting to do the same thing. Why? Because we do have mothers who lose children. The 21-year-old son of one of my constituents was killed in Hamilton, walking across the street, by somebody getting into a fast car and deciding to race another person. Guess what? They didn't even stop; they just kept going. So mom said, "No more. I'm walking to Queen's Park. I'm walking to Ottawa. We need to change the culture."

We're hearing that, story after story, we need to change the culture. So we as legislators hear the stories. We do the research. We make the modifications. Collectively—as we're doing today, which is really refreshing—all parties are sitting back saying, "It's time for us to help to change that culture. We're hearing you nice and loud and clear. You're telling us that we don't want this to happen anymore." So we need to start changing some of the legislation.

What is in the proposal for drinking and driving and street racing? Street racing: Section 172 prohibits street racing. That already exists. The current penalty for street racing is a \$200 minimum and a \$1,000 maximum fine or six months imprisonment, or both—a fine and imprisonment—and a maximum driver's licence suspension of two years. That's what's on the books right now.

Society is telling us to help with that cultural change, so here's what we're going to do. The fine is increased to \$2,000 minimum and \$10,000 maximum, and the driver's licence suspension is increased to a maximum of two years for the first offence and a maximum of 10 years for a subsequent offence. In addition, there will be a seven-day administrative driver's licence suspension and a vehicle impoundment. Do you want to get somebody right where it hurts? Get them with their toy. Take their toy away and then they'll second-guess whether or not they want to street race. That's one of the ways in which we want to help them understand that the culture's going to change: You suspend them and impound their vehicle. And the driver's licence suspension will apply not only to people with Ontario drivers' licences, but to drivers' licences of other jurisdictions as well.

I know that that's one part of the street racing improvements that have been made in the bill, and it's another step to help us change the culture. But where do we change the culture? Do we change it with a law that says that we're going to hit you with a fine or that we're going to impound your car? No, that doesn't do it. Do you know where the culture changes? Let's peel this back. Do the parents know that these kids have got these

cars? Do the parents know that they're using these vehicles as torpedoes in the middle of a street? Let's ask them to start paying attention. So we need to start doing an educational program, which the minister has committed to.

The other thing the minister has committed to is to talk to the organizations and the hobbyists that want to soup up their cars, because guess what? Since the car's been invented, it's been souped up. There have been people using cars forever because of the speed and the luxury and the excitement of driving fast. What are they doing? Well, the minister is now talking to those organizations to find out if there's a safe place and a safe haven for them to go practise their hobby. What we're now talking about is cultural change: "What's your excuse now that we've provided you with a venue to do the racing?" It's the thrill of not getting caught. It's the thrill of racing down the middle of the street, zigging in and out of traffic. That's what the thrill is.

We then start to give our police enforcement the tools to immediately deal with that, and that's the other reason why I think the legislation is moving in the right direction: seven-day vehicle impoundment, seven-day licence suspension versus 48 hours presently; increasing the maximum fine from \$2,000 to \$10,000, where it's now \$200 and \$1,000. Court-ordered suspensions: Courts could impose a driver's licence suspension of up to 10 years for a second conviction. So it's trying to make it very unsexy to get caught.

The previous speaker talked about the police officers not having enough tools to do that. You know what? I disagree, and here's why. I disagree because we already have so many laws on the book that OPP officers are charged with fulfilling on the highways and municipal police officers are empowered to enforce on the streets. They know what to do. Collectively, they have these programs where they do, for instance, the seat belt blitzes. They say, "All of a sudden, we're going to focus on this and we're going to find out."

We talked earlier about the cultural change. We've changed the culture slightly by wearing seat belts. When it first came out, there was a hue and cry about liberty, saying, "You're taking away my right not to have a seat belt on. I don't want to wear a seat belt. It wrinkles my jacket," or, "I don't want to wear a seat belt because you're telling me I have to wear it." And there was another one that came out shortly after they were introduced on a regular basis: "I don't want to wear a seat belt. I'll die if I get in an accident."

Mr. Bisson: Remember the motorcycle helmet debate?

Mr. Levac: My friend from Timmins—James Bay reminds me of the motorcycle helmet debate as well. Quite frankly, those are cultural changes in terms of what we have to understand. And guess what the compliance rate is for seat belts in Ontario. Is it 50%? Is it 60%? Is it 75%? It's 98% compliance, because people understand that it's the right thing to do and we changed the culture and expectation. And guess what? The death rate of the

98% who use their seat belts—the 2% who don't, the death rate is 60%. That's amazing. For those 2% who still don't get it and don't wear their seat belt, it's a 60% death rate.

1720

Mr. Bisson: The amount is 60% of the death rate?

Mr. Levac: Of death. It's unfortunate. It really is unfortunate that people miss that. But quite frankly, we are talking about cultural changes. That's the reason why I think we have to take this bill for what it is: another step and another tool for all of us to use and the signal to the rest of the culture inside of Ontario that we've got to stop doing this. The drinking and driving issue is the one that we're all agreeing on as something that we need to continue to fight and continue to work on.

I want to add a personal note here. I have been blessed with three wonderful children. They're now young adults. In their own way, their own cultures—each of them had their own group of friends, and not one of them has ever had the problem of not knowing where they were going to be and how they were going to get there in dealing with drinking and driving. Every single one of them, throughout the times—

Mr. Bisson: At least that you know.

Mr. Levac: The member challenges me again. He says, "At least the ones" that I know of. But you know what? I believe them. I had very, very strong faith in this group that they hung around with. They always designated a driver. They always had cab fare or they always knew they could call one of us as parents to say, "Can you come and pick me up?" There was not ever, in their group as they were growing up, from around 14 to 25, an incident where we had a phone call saying that somebody was drinking and driving.

I think this group of young adults gets it. I honestly believe that they have the culture change in their hearts already—far better than what we were in our younger ages. I confess that some of my friends listening tonight will laugh like crazy, because I'm an abstainer and I don't drink alcohol. I was the designated driver. I ensured that in any group that I hung around with, I always had the keys. As a matter of fact, if they used me as the designated driver, I felt privileged to be used, not to see somebody get killed in a car.

The cultural change we're talking about is in drinking and driving. We're talking about street racing.

Mr. Bisson: Can you come to the next reception with me?

Mr. Levac: I'll take care of you, Gilles. I'll take care of you.

Let me talk to you quickly about a couple of points that I've been hearing about members in this place offering private members' bills. I've got a list of them: Oak Ridges, Simcoe North, Chatham-Kent Essex, Prince Edward-Hastings, Niagara Centre, and myself; I offered three or four different private members' bills. And you know what? That's a good-news story. The good-news story is that the private members' hour does create some ideas and some concepts that need to be incorporated,

and they have been incorporated by many governments of the past and will continue to be where good ideas come through, no matter whether they're from the opposition or even from the backbenches of a government. Those ideas get infiltrated. They come to life, they bubble up and they end up in legislation, and that's a good thing. I think that's another piece that we beat ourselves up over as to whether or not we're giving credit or getting credit or taking credit or whatever. You know what? If it gets in legislation and it helps somebody, it's a good thing.

I say, to all the members who have offered some kind of traffic safety issues in their private members' bills, congratulations, and thank you very much for that.

Last but not least, I'll leave you with a couple of thoughts about the blue flashing lights. I remember being in the opposition. The member from Niagara Centre and I were both the critics at the time of the Solicitor General, and we talked about the flashing lights. I did a research project and shared it with the member from Niagara Centre. We found out that there were so many jurisdictions that understood what the blue light was all about, but unfortunately at the time the blue light was not accepted as an amendment in some of the bills that we were dealing with with the previous government. But now we're doing it, and I'm glad to see that we're doing it, because there are many other lights being used. We're looking at the green light now; we're looking at the blue light, the blue/red light, the blue/white light, the white light. All of the lights that are used in the safety of the highway are a good thing. It's a good thing.

Interjection.

Mr. Levac: No more red light sections from over there. I don't want to hear that kind of talk.

I want to end my comments by simply responding to some of the concern that's out there that this particular piece of legislation has to be the be-all and end-all. Quite frankly, that's just not the way it works in this place, from all governments, from successive governments. One piece of legislation is not the most successful piece of legislation on the planet. It will continue to grow and it will continue to need some tweaking and it will continue to need some amending.

I'm looking forward to getting this to committee so that we can all get together and say, "Are we producing the best piece of legislation for highway safety?" Quite frankly, I think we're headed there, and I look forward to the rest of that debate. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I actually enjoyed the presentation made by my good friend the government whip. I thought his arguments were well put and well understood, and I think he speaks from the perspective of some experience he has had over the years both personally and as an MPP.

I just want to say this. I can't help it, when we're in these kinds of debates, when we're talking about increasing fines as a deterrent, we all know at the end of the day it's not really the fine that's going to do it; it's the fear of getting caught is what it comes down to. If the fine for

street racing goes from \$1,000 to \$10,000, I guess there's some minimal impact on the person who's about to race their car or whatever it might be, thinking, "I can't afford the 10,000 bucks; whoops, maybe I won't do it." The reality is the fear of getting caught. That's where we're having a problem.

I guess this is where I disagree with him. I think that we in this Legislature are asking our police officers to do more and more every day, that we bring forward legislation asking police officers to do more and more. As social services start to diminish, police officers are having to do more and more. They are, quite frankly, doing the work of some social workers in many of our communities. What we see is an inability on the part of the police to do what we're asking them to do, because we're asking them to do more and they don't necessarily have more to do it with.

So I think at one point we're going to have to have a debate in this Legislature about a couple of things. One of those is, if we really want to have an effect in stopping people from drinking and driving more than we are today, or street racing, we need to find some way of elevating the possibility that they will actually get caught. That, at the end of the day, is what's going to stop people. We've all seen it. If somebody's out on the road and you're out at your camper, or whatever it is, and somebody comes in and says the police are patrolling, nobody gets in their car and drives down that highway if they think the cops are on the road. But if they think the cops aren't there, they might take a chance. At some point we need to figure out a way to give the police the resources they need to better do their jobs.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I listened very carefully to the comments of the member from Brant. It actually was, as the previous speaker indicated, very interesting to listen to some of the personal experiences that he put into his comments. I want to tell him, his comments, both in his speech and prior to that, in comments he has made in this debate, really are touching. They touch on what we're all here for. That's to make life better for others and to ensure that as we move forward, we bring in legislation that will help ensure that things that happened in the past that have negatively impacted people, families—tragedies—somehow or other, some of them can be avoided in the future.

I think we'd be unrealistic to suggest that we'll never see another tragedy due to drinking and driving. I think we'd be unrealistic to suggest that we'll never see another street race tragedy. But this legislation helps. It strengthens the drinking and driving provisions, to discourage drinking and driving, in particular for the repeat offenders. I think that's one of the things that really gets in the craw of all of us when we hear these stories—I don't know how true they all are, but some of them must be, where somebody is drinking and driving, they get caught, they get punished and then they're out, and within a matter of weeks they're out doing it again and again. Whether in fact they get away with it to that extent, I don't know, but this legislation will ensure that

when their vehicle is seized—you can't drive if you don't have a vehicle. When their vehicle is seized and forfeited once and for all, that driver could be off the road, should be off the road. That's not to say he's not going to jump into somebody else's vehicle one day, but I'll tell you, it's another positive step forward to ensure that these tragedies, spoken about very well by the member from Brant, do not happen again in the future.

Mr. McNeely: I'd just like to deal with some of the issues about the suspensions and the ignition interlock. The new opportunities to learn more about drinking and driving and to get back into the vehicle as a driver are very important. There were concerns that we're getting softer on drunk drivers, but we're not. We're going to deal with the education and with the changes that must be accepted by these drivers.

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Rather than having them out there as unlicensed drivers and driving again with their problems, this legislation will put that incentive there for them to get the ignition interlock and to take the treatment. That is so important. We cannot have unlicensed drivers driving out there, not dealing with their bad habits. This will get some of them to where they can drive again, but where they will have that ignition interlock it will prevent them driving if they have any alcohol in their blood. This is important. It's not making it softer on driving under the influence. It's going to make it an incentive to get out there, to deal with their problem; to protect other people on the roads, they will not be out there any longer.

I just wanted to again emphasize that we're trying to offer solutions of education and treatment that are going to make our roads safer.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Questions or comments?

Then the member for—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I can sit here patiently.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services, you have two minutes to comment.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): No, I would just simply recognize that it seems as if the debate has ended for this session.

Mr. Levac: You can have two minutes.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: No, I thought we would refer the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: He does get two minutes to respond. That's what we're getting to. The member for Brant.

Mr. Levac: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity.

Thank you to the member from Timmins—James Bay, as always, for sharing his concerns about enforcement. I don't disagree that the fines are not the panacea, but I also would strongly suggest to you that there is going to be some sober second thought about getting caught, about losing your car, about having a possible \$10,000 fine and going to prison. If we've made the decision to

make that cultural change, everybody is going to be expecting that these cases are going to be done and they're going to be dealt with harshly. I think the community at large will get the message out that this is one of the ways in which you'd better start thinking before you start doing this again. That's the first one.

The second one is, I trust very emphatically in the creativity of the OPP and the police officers we have. They've got wonderful programs that are designed specifically within their own communities on how to catch these people and how to deal with them. They're going to be getting some equipment and they're going to be doing some things within their own municipalities and through the OPP of, "How do we now take this piece of legislation and turn it into something that we want, which is the tools to send the message out that we're not going to be accepting this kind of behaviour?" I guess we're going to end up agreeing to disagree, because I do think that in terms of what the OPP is capable of doing, they're going to be a partner in helping us change that culture by knocking these guys down and putting them in the place where they belong.

I don't want the hobby to die. I want the hobby to be enforced somewhere else, where they're not going to kill people. I think that's the idea, the message I'm getting. The argument about whether or not we should be stopping this altogether will become moot because we'll change the direction of where it's happening.

The RIDE programs we've got and the comments about "Where's a cop when you need one?"—those things are going to be forever. There are times when I don't see people signalling and they're driving whacky on the road, and your question is, "Where's a cop when we need him?" Anyway, I think we're moving in the right direction.

Thank you to the member for Scarborough Centre and the parliamentary assistant from Ottawa—Orléans for the work that they're doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I'm surprised that I got my turn so quickly.

I want to put a couple of things on the record because I think they need to be said in regard to this particular debate.

We find ourselves yet again in the Legislature, as an assembly, putting forward legislation that's going to mandate our police officers to do something else. That in itself is not a bad thing. There is nobody in this Legislature, in any political party or as an independent member, who sits in this House today and says they're not in favour of clamping down on drunk drivers and they're not in favour of clamping down on people who race their vehicles on our streets or back roads somewhere in Ontario—not one of us. But the problem we have is that, as a Legislature, we keep on passing legislation further telling our police officers to do more, and we're not necessarily giving them the resources to do it. That was the point that I was trying to make earlier.

This morning I was at the Sudbury Cambrian College at—I forget; I think they call it the eDome, where the

Environmental Commissioner was giving his report, and that was exactly the point that he was making: Over the years, we here in the Legislature have told the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment, just as we are in this bill today telling the law enforcement community, "Here are more things you've got to do. Here are your legislative requirements that we're giving you as a Legislature to make sure that certain laws are followed in this land." What the commissioner said this morning is what I'm saying here today, that we're not giving the resources to the ministries to properly do their jobs.

To this bill, I'm just going to propose a couple of really outrageous things, and I'm not going to pretend for a second that I'm in favour of them, but I think it's a debate that we have to start having. If we are serious about trying to curb these issues, we need to find some way of elevating the possibility in somebody's mind that they're going to get caught. The whip from across the way—I don't know your riding; I'm sorry.

Mr. Levac: Brant.

Mr. Bisson: The member from Brant makes the very good point that over the years we have changed the culture, for example, with drinking and driving to where 40 years ago, when I was a child—my God, it goes fast—it was quite acceptable for dad to drive you home when he was under the influence. And I don't say that with pride, but that was the reality of the late 1950s, early 1960s. My father did it when we were kids. Was it smart? No, it was absolutely stupid, but that was sort of the norm of these guys who came in after the war and were working class and had their issues in regard to the demons they were dealing with that stemmed from the Second World War, and many of them took to the bottle. It was just part of the norm.

But you're right; society changed the culture. What made it change is that people started to fear being caught and, if they were caught, to what degree they would be ostracized by society and their neighbours—not just what they were going to pay as a fine, not just that they were going to maybe lose their driver's licence, but the stigma that would be attached to them as being people who were driving under the influence. How did we do that? We went to the police departments across this province, both municipal and the provincial police, and we gave them the resources to do the RIDE program. You remember them all. The RIDE program could pop up anywhere, at any time, 365 days a year. You could be driving on Highway 400 or you could be on a dirt road out behind Kapuskasing and you'd find the RIDE program sometimes. So drivers who had the habit of being under the influence from time to time started worrying about possibly getting caught. The police officers had the resources to put the officers in the field in order to set up RIDE programs and to do spot checks of different types so that we were elevating the possibility that the person who was breaking the law was going to get caught, and that's what made the difference.

I agree with the member: MADD had a huge part to do with this in changing the culture. I don't want to

diminish for a second the tragedy of those people who have lost their kids and eventually became involved in MADD and the great work that MADD did, but what happened was that MADD created the condition by which this Legislature appropriated the money for the police forces across this province and said, "You shall set up RIDE programs." That was, I believe, the watershed, because I remember well also, where I come from—and it was probably the same thing for the member from Brant, where he comes from in southwestern Ontario, and probably the same in Ottawa or Toronto—people started worrying about being caught. When they worried about being caught, that's when the habits changed; that's when people said, "I'm not taking that chance, because not only am I going to get fined and not only may I lose my licence, the possibility is that now I will get caught." There was a time when the odds of being caught were very much less.

So I say, if we're going to do these types of legislative initiatives, we need to find some way to give police officers the ability to enforce the law, so that if it's either street racing or it's drinking and driving, we have an opportunity to give the police officers the capacity they need—and I'm not going to use the words "give them the tools"; somebody did that before, and I didn't like that, so I'm going to talk about capacity—to catch them.

Now, let me give you some radical ideas, something that I'm sure that people in this Legislature, as well as people in this province, might disagree with me.

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If we know, for example, that there are areas where there's street racing happening on a fairly regular basis, why not put up surveillance cameras? You've got the video evidence of the car, you've got the licence number if you're lucky, and you may even have a picture of the individual. If somebody knows that they may get caught by way of that type of technology, at the very least they're not going to be racing there. But hopefully you'll do it in a passive way so that originally nobody knows, so that you can start catching people. It's just an idea.

I understand there are privacy issues and all of that comes into play. I'm not a big one for putting cameras on every street corner in our cities; that's not really the point I'm making. But if there's some way that we can utilize technology in order to increase the ability of police officers to catch somebody in the act, I think that would be a deterrent.

So if the person who likes to race their car and soup up a street car into a modified street racer of some type, using the kinds of fuels that were talked about here today—if we knew a way of being able to catch them by giving resources to the police department so that they have adequate staff to monitor those areas where they know street racing is happening, either by physical or electronic presence, and the possibility that these people will actually get caught in the act, I can tell you that you'd see a decrease in the amount of street racing.

In our cities we know, for example, that there are certain avenues and streets where there's high-speed,

maybe I wouldn't call it racing per se, but where people like to do excessive speeds. Just the fact that you've got a sign out that says there's a camera here might be enough to scare somebody into not doing it. Again, I'm going to say up front that this is not a position of my party. I don't even know, at the end of the day, if I'm totally supportive, but my point is that we need to find some way of giving police officers the capacity to catch people. Until people are fearful of being caught, it will be, "Forget it."

I was just talking earlier to the member from Scarborough Centre. We were having a bit of a discussion about the whole issue of drinking and driving, and I made the comment—and I think he kind of agrees with me; I'll let him speak to that later—that, for example, in cottage country across Ontario, and I don't care if it's around Orillia or if it's up in northwestern or northeastern Ontario or wherever it might be, you can almost see it on the weekend. If people know the police officers are out there patrolling either the waterways or the roads, they don't go on the waterways and roads while they're drinking; period.

We've all seen it. Somebody says, "Oh, don't get in your car. The OPP are out this weekend." The word goes across the lake and nobody gets in their car on the weekend if they're drinking, which is a good thing, because the police officers are out there doing their job. They're showing the flag. They're showing their presence. They're making it known that they're there. They're saying, "If you do something stupid and break the law, we're here to catch you." That's the point. We need to find some way to resource police officers to do their job. I say on that point that it's very important that we give police officers the resources they need to be able to catch people in the act.

The other thing I want to say on this particular point is about the whole issue of education and what that has to do with it, because I think it's the other one. There's a really successful program. One of the members might remember the name.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: The DARE program. The DARE program goes into our schools and we resource our police officers—municipalities mostly resource their police officers—to go into the schools and to discourage kids from taking drugs.

I remember that, when that program first came out, the little people who were in schools back then, in grade 4, grade 5 and grade 6, were at the age of sort of looking around the world and wondering what's going on and trying to figure out who they're going to be in later days.

The police officers would go in; I remember Constable Charbonneau—C-h-a-r-b-o-n-, something like that—would go into the schools across the city of Timmins, under the responsibility of the Timmins Police Service, and challenge these kids, through an educational program, to stay away from drugs. It is a bit of a scared-straight program. You know, years later I'm running across kids I saw at those initial DARE presentations, and they're no longer kids. They're young adults, 19 to

22 years old, and they come to me and say, "Mr. Bisson, I remember you were in my grade 5 class. You know what? I haven't done drugs because of that, because of what that police officer said."

So we know that education at an early age makes a difference. What we did was that we resourced our police officers. We said, "Go into the schools and talk to kids about the use of drugs, how bad an idea that is and what could happen when you do drugs." As a result, I would argue, there are many kids who grew up to become adults who never touched drugs because of that experience. I would argue that in legislation like this we need to think about that as well. We have to say to kids, we have to say to the general public in whatever way we can, "Here's what we want to do by way of legislation when it comes to street racing. Here's what we want to do around drinking and driving," and put our money where our mouth is to engage the public in some sort of dialogue, through advertising and a combination of whatever else, to be able to engage the citizenry in understanding that these things are bad. I don't know if it's snitch lines. I don't know what it is. There have got to be different ways of engaging the public so that they become part of understanding that there's a problem but they also become part of the system and recognizing these behaviours themselves and saying, "That's not right."

The member for Brant made a point earlier. I'm just going to come back to it because I think it's an important one. He talked about being the designated driver. I've been to many events, as have all members in this House, on Friday and Saturday nights. I was in Kapuskasing at the chamber of commerce event on Saturday. My point is that most of these events have alcohol being served, and how many times have I seen that somebody goes up and physically grabs someone's keys? I've seen it at some events. It's not widespread, but I've seen where, as you're having a chat with somebody, some man or woman walks up and grabs the keys of the person and says, "By the way, you're not driving. I'm driving you home." The person says, "Why? I've only had two beers." "Yes. You're over the limit." I've seen that a number of times. Why is that? It's because we've engaged the citizenry in being part of the solution. We've said to them, "Here's something you can do to prevent the tragic death of somebody as a result of drunk driving"—or maybe even the person who's the driver. We've said, "You can do something really simple: Take the keys." All I'm saying is that it's not good enough to say in legislation, "Here are the penalties," that we're going to increase the penalties as far as fines. I would argue that we need to find a way to do two things. One is to raise the possibility of the person being caught. The second thing that I think we really need to do is to find some way of engaging the citizenry in being part of the solution. I believe we cannot have an impact and an effect on this issue as profoundly as we want unless we're able to do that in some meaningful way.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): I'm delighted to be able to speak on this very

important bill. The bill really has two very important key components on drinking and driving in section 48. It states that the current 12-hour suspension for drivers will be increased to three days for the first incident and seven days for the second incident.

But the other part is street racing, section 172. We know that this is a major problem all over Ontario, in the rest of Canada and in other countries. But I've gone through rural areas many times where I see kids at noontime coming out of high school and going to the side roads and starting to speed and race. I have to say that one day I was very surprised. I had to call the police because they were racing and they didn't realize the effect if an accident would occur. They come from good families most of the time. It was a real heartbreaker for me too. I looked at them afterwards and said, "Did you realize that if you ever get into an accident, the cost to get insurance later, or that you'll need a car to follow up your education at university, and when you want to go on to the labour market, or that you might lose your car?" But those people do not realize the effects when they proceed with racing on the road. It's very important. I would say we might have to go a little further and ask school boards to organize education sessions to tell them what is implicated in that bill for the safety of Ontarians.

1750

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Timmins—James Bay. Certainly, he related some real-world experiences that he's come into throughout his life and explained how the attitudes in society have changed, particularly as they relate to drinking and driving, and this bill will really help to change those attitudes still further, to make it so that eventually probably there will be zero tolerance for drinking and driving.

He also mentioned the DARE program, which I believe stands for drug awareness resistance education. Certainly, in my area of Parry Sound—Muskoka we've had an excellent DARE program. I had an opportunity to go up to Parry Sound to participate in the graduation ceremony a couple of years ago. It was run for a number of years by Constable Christine Dawson, and she did an excellent job, which was obvious from her interaction with the school-aged children she was teaching. I believe the program had some great benefits in the Parry Sound area and actually I look forward to going to the ceremony once again this year.

All three parties support Bill 203, and we look forward to the bill going to committee. I know the member from Oak Ridges has some amendments to do with the street racing part of the bill; otherwise, we look forward to the bill wrapping up second reading and heading to committee, where it will be further improved.

Mr. Levac: Very quickly, yes, it's going to go to committee. We want to have hearings. We want to make sure that we can improve the bill, so there will probably be some amendments to it.

The minister indicated to me that they're going to do an education program. The minister indicated to me they're going to work with many ministries to try to

make sure that the OPP has the tools and the vehicles and the wherewithal to comply with getting this dealt with.

The member from Timmins-James Bay has offered us some good challenges, and quite frankly they will be reached. We're going to do the education program. We're going to be doing the outreach to help us hobbyists get somewhere else, get it off the street so that we can stop the carnage on the road. Quite frankly, I think we're all headed in the right direction, and I look forward to getting this bill to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay, you have the opportunity for two minutes.

Mr. Bisson: Let's see if I can skate for four minutes.

I thank the members for their comments. I hope they take my comments as friendly advice in regard to what can be done. I just want to say again very quickly, there's nobody in this House who doesn't support the idea of having legislation that goes further towards trying to stop the practice of street racing and drinking and driving. Nobody in this House disapproves. Nobody is on the negative side of that. However, we need to find some way to give police officers the ability to do the job we're asking them to do.

All I was saying here in this debate today was two things: One is that we need to raise the possibility of people being caught by people knowing that if they go out and street race or drink and drive, there's a big chance they'll get caught. I spoke about the RIDE program as a good example of how that deterred drinking and driving. When people knew that police officers could be on any highway in Ontario at any particular time looking for drunk drivers, they stopped drinking and driving to the degree they did before. We need to find some way—and it's not necessarily a RIDE program—of giving police officers the ability to plan and then finance

whatever they want to do when it comes to increasing their presence so we're able to curb the issue of drinking and driving and street racing.

I talked about the possibility of giving them the ability to use new technologies. Maybe there is a time to have a debate around the use of cameras to see if that would be an appropriate way of dealing with problem areas when it comes to street racing and others.

But again, the bigger thing—and I think this is really what I want to end on—is the issue giving the citizenry the ability to be part of the solution, because if we don't have the citizens involved, it ain't going to work. We all know now that it is accepted that if you see somebody drinking and driving, you grab their keys. It's a real simple thing. You do what you have to do to stop them from getting into a 2,000-pound vehicle that can kill somebody and themselves, and you do that by taking the keys. We need some way to empower citizens.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mrs. Cansfield has moved second reading of Bill 203. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'd move that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

The Deputy Speaker: The bill shall therefore be referred to the standing committee on finance.

It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned and will resume at 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Markham	Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Erie-Lincoln Essex	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Crosier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (IND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean-Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Guelph-Wellington	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)		Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)		Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)		Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)		Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Waterloo–Wellington	Elliott, Christine (PC)
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)		Zimmer, David (L)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakubski, John (PC)	Whitby–Ajax	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	Willowdale	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough Centre Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)		Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough East Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	Windsor–St. Clair	Ferreira, Paul (ND)
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)	York North / York-Nord	
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)	York West / York-Ouest	
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 162B

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 38th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 38^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Tuesday 24 April 2007****Mardi 24 avril 2007**Speaker
Honourable Michael A. BrownPrésident
L'honorable Michael A. BrownClerk
Deborah DellerGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002, and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act, when Bill 198 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on justice policy; and

That the standing committee on justice policy shall be authorized to meet, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, on Wednesday, May 9, 2007 and Thursday, May 10, 2007, following routine proceedings until 6 p.m. if needed for the purpose of conducting public hearings on the bill and that the committee be further authorized to meet on May 16, 2007, following routine proceedings for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 p.m. on Monday, May 14, 2007. No later than 5 p.m. on May 16, 2007, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill, and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than May 17, 2007. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be

deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on justice policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That on the day the order for third reading of the bill is called, the time available for debate up to 5:50 p.m. or 9:20 p.m., as the case may be, shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, except in the case of any vote deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h), the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 343. I shall now call for debate on the motion. I recognize again the government House leader.

1850

Hon. Mr. Bradley: This is a motion allocating the specific timing for the bill to be considered. It is not something that I ever enjoy doing. I sat on the opposition benches and I gave speeches denouncing these particular motions. But I think in those days it was really reasonable to do so. I don't know if it is today.

I want to say to my colleagues in opposition that I appreciate, in all sincerity, that they are here to debate legislation, and there are times when we can't reach agreement. I have to deal with the two opposition House leaders, and I want the members of this Legislature to know that though they fight the tough battle on behalf of their parties, they are not unreasonable to deal with. They are not people who, I have noted over my time as House leader, I would refer to as engaging in unnecessary delay on legislation. I think they genuinely have a view about legislation and want to see appropriate debate take place. I know there are times when this House can become exercised over this, and I've got to say that in my dealings with the opposition House leaders, they've been good dealings. There are times when we cannot finally reach agreement, and so we have to provide an opportunity to set up a timetable for discussion of the bill.

I try to accommodate in these time allocation motions the needs of the opposition. For instance, there's an opportunity to debate this evening, but subsequent to that, you'll notice that in the time allocation motion there's a provision for committee hearings. It's not as though we've said, "This is the end of it. No committee hearings, no clause-by-clause and no third reading." I try to ensure that when our staff is working on these kinds of motions, they take into account the desires of the opposition and the public to see certain hearings take place. There is a consultation. It's not always reflected precisely as the opposition would like to see, but I try to ensure that there is an accommodation for those public hearings and for clause-by-clause.

Governments, by their nature, like to proceed with legislation as expeditiously as possible while still having an appropriate debate, and members of this House have certainly debated this bill at some length at the present time. Consultations took place with the general public before this bill and there will be consultations through the committee process as well. So this is not a motion which closes off debate; it simply is a motion which allocates a specific timing.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: The member for Niagara Centre—not in his own seat, I might note—is banging his chair and table in glee. It must be because of his enthusiasm for this particular resolution.

This is an important bill. It's talking about water. It's conserving and protecting the waters of the Great Lakes basin for future generations of Ontarians. The legislation will reinforce basin-wide environmental standards, improve science-based decision-making, strengthen the ban on diversions, and promote water conservation. So this government is simply doing what many jurisdictions in Canada have done: placing a regulatory charge on industrial and commercial users of water.

Let's be clear: This is a regulatory charge; it is not a tax. There is not a reason there to make a lot of money from this. It's simply to cover the costs which would be associated with the regulatory process. Revenue collected from the charge would be used to cover a portion of the province's costs for managing water resources.

This government says that it's about time private industry pays its fair share for Ontario's most precious resource. The proposed charges will be in line with what other jurisdictions in North America charge per million litres. It's important to the Great Lakes because the Great Lakes contain 95% of North America's fresh water supply; 70% of Ontario's urban residents take their water from the Great Lakes proper and 95% from the Great Lakes basin.

I suspect that the three House leaders who are here today, and some of the members of the House, in fact—my friend from Brockville and my friend from Beaches—East York are on the lake, and my friend Peter Kormos from Niagara Centre. We all rely on water from the lakes, so we know how important they are.

The Great Lakes power Canada's economic engine. They support 45% of Canada's industrial activity and 25% of Canada's agricultural production. Together, Great Lakes jurisdictions make up the third-largest economy in the world, after the United States and Japan.

So we have the motion before us tonight. We have had some significant debate on the bill. This motion will allow us whatever time is needed to consider the motion itself. I'm pleased and I welcome the input of the opposition during committee hearings, where they'll be questioning those making presentations to the committee, and during clause-by-clause when the opposition, if they feel it's appropriate, will offer amendments or speak on any government amendments that might flow from the fact that you've had a consultation through the committee process.

Then in third reading—I can remember in my earlier days in this Legislature, third reading was a rarity. But we have made provision for a third reading and the division of the time three ways so that each of the recognized parties in the House may comment, after the hearings have taken place and after the clause-by-clause, on their opinions on what the final bill brings to Ontario.

As I say, it is always with great reluctance—and I think members of this House know that—that I have a time allocation motion before us. My colleagues on the opposite side need only go to Hansard to read back my speeches on time allocation motions. Of course, then we realize that my speeches were justified because we certainly did need more time. And now we hope that we have made provision for what I consider to be and I hope most Ontarians consider to be an appropriate amount of time allocated for further discussion of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the motion?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in a debate that to some degree mystifies me, in the sense that I'm not sure why we are doing this, why the government has felt it necessary to bring in time allocation on this legislation.

The government House leader has referenced the working relationship between the three House leaders in this place, and I think he was quite accurate. We do try to negotiate the business as we proceed on the legislative calendar. One of the things that I want to reference tonight is the fact that at our last meeting—we don't normally talk a great deal about what transpires in those meetings, but I think it's relevant this evening and important that I put it on the record with respect to this legislation. We share the view that we should be going to public hearings, we should be allowing public input and getting on with dealing with the legislation and perhaps modifying it, ensuring that we get it right.

Based on that, from our party's perspective, the official opposition, we indicated just last Thursday that we were quite prepared to not participate in any further debate. No member of the Progressive Conservative Party, the official opposition, would continue to speak to this legislation. We were quite prepared to see it referred to committee immediately. So you can imagine my sur-

prise, as the House leader for the official opposition, when the Clerk arrived at my door with a time allocation motion. For those folks who are viewing these proceedings tonight, what that effectively is—it's not quite the full definition of closure, but what it does is very severely restrict debate on legislation, and in many instances—most instances—restricts the committee hearings and the time allocated for third reading debate as well.

That to me is, as I said, mystifying. I'm not sure why the government is proceeding down this road. We hear speculation that they want this place to close down because of what's happening in question period on a daily basis—one scandal after another scandal. I'm not sure that's the case, but I really haven't heard an adequate or understandable explanation, given the willingness of the official opposition to proceed in a timely and, I think, responsible way to ensure that this bill was appropriately dealt with and the public had an adequate opportunity to express their views and to suggest ways in which this bill perhaps could be improved and could be the best legislation possible.

1900

This is, I suppose, despite the fine words of the House leader, indicative of some of the bewildering behaviour of the government with respect to its decisions to bring in restrictions on debate in this place. We saw it, I think it was last week—correct me if I'm wrong—with respect to legislation on electoral reform. The irony of that is, here we have legislation purporting to talk about improving the election process in this province and the way the government and the Legislature operate and address the interests of Ontarians, and the government of the day brings in closure, restricts debate.

That's not a very good message if we're talking about improving the situation. It again raises a whole series of questions about the motivation of this Liberal government and what it's really attempting to achieve here, other than sending out these very politically popular messages of "We're doing this. We're doing electoral reform. We're doing legislation on water-taking. We're doing legislation on a whole range of areas." But really they're meaningless, they're red herrings, they're false fronts in terms of reality.

That's essentially what I'm concerned about. I think if you go down the road of all the Liberal promises in the last election campaign and their failure to fulfill a significant number of those—I think 50 at last count—it's something that should be worrisome, to say the least, to the good people of Ontario.

I think it would be wrong-headed on the part of the official opposition to lengthen the debate this evening. To the best of my ability, I have tried to put our position on the record in respect to an approach we took last week. We were quite prepared to move quickly on this legislation and we think that's the appropriate way to go. Based on that position, which has not changed despite the government's decision to invoke closure, we will not prolong the debate this evening. We want to see this

move along, as we indicated at the House leaders' meeting last week.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the motion?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I hadn't anticipated speaking so early on this, but here I am. It seems that the government is more than happy to have this debate collapse, and therefore I'm going to stand up and speak, I guess, for half my time, as my colleague has just arrived, unfortunately, a minute or two too late.

Here we have the government House leader standing and making a motion of closure. I didn't think I would ever live to see the day, having heard all of his magnificent speeches against closure in the last Parliament, having heard him wax so eloquently against governments that were bound and determined not to let the members of this Legislature speak to important issues that were before us.

I cannot think of a more important issue probably than the sale of our water and other resources. But here we have a government that intends to invoke closure, and the member who is invoking it is probably the most passionate debater in the last two decades against such a measure. So it is with this delicious irony that I stand here to speak against the motion of closure. I could, of course, as he suggested, quote his many, many statements against closure. There are tomes, there are volumes built upon what Jim Bradley, in his various guises in this House, has said about the ignominious practice of closure. I will only suffice it to say that he has acknowledged himself in his own statement and his own embarrassed tone that he is very reluctant to have done what he has done here today.

I look at what the government is setting out. The government is having very limited debate in committee, is forcing the committee to report by May 17, some three weeks hence, is giving limited time for people to come forward who have complaints, and is in fact hamstringing this Legislature in looking full square at this bill.

Mr. Speaker, water is important to all of us, and if you will allow me to digress for a minute, I was downstairs, and I think all of the members who are here in the Legislature—actually, not downstairs; on this very floor—wish you were still on this very floor at the other end. The Niagara region was here talking about the wonderful products that are produced in Niagara region. There was some terrific food, there were some libations and there were many wineries from the Niagara region area, from all around southern Ontario, that were there talking about their wineries. Now I, for one, think that when we're talking about water, perhaps the minister would have been far wiser in his statements to talk about turning that water into wine. I know this is perhaps beyond his powers and perhaps this is of biblical proportion, but when you speak to the people who own those vineyards, when you speak to the people who grow the products, when you understand from them the importance of irrigation and of water and of the legacy that we have here in Ontario, you will understand that they are somewhat chagrined by what is happening here tonight.

We had the opportunity to meet some of the very best wineries of the Niagara region, and I was particularly impressed. And if you'll allow me, Mr. Speaker, just because I need to say this, I was particularly impressed by the quality of the wine that was served by those particular vineyards. They literally have turned water, which we are talking about tonight, into wine. They have used their resources—the soil, the climate, the infrastructure of the Niagara region—to produce a remarkable product. But I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was particularly enamoured and absorbed by a small winery called DeMaria. They were there. They produce nothing but icewine and they have literally turned water and the soil and the fruit they grow into something that would literally be called the nectar of the gods.

Would that we were all still there, but of course this government wanted to invoke closure. I am sure that the government House leader, who seemed to be having as equally good a time as I was having there, wishes he was still there too. But instead, they chose this night of all nights to invoke closure and this night of all nights to talk about why we need to get this particular bill through. In my wildest imagination I cannot understand the rationale, given his very real reticence in doing something that he has spent decades saying we should not do, and doing that on a night when we are all there to celebrate his community and the remarkable transformation of the winery industry in the last 20 to 30 years in the Niagara region. It is something that has become world class. Instead, we are here arguing about a closure motion which he ought not to have introduced.

I am sure that if the government House leader from the Conservative Party, who spoke earlier, and the government House leader from the NDP are always equally good fellows, as he pretended they were, they could have come to some kind of conclusion that would have obviated this entire night. But instead, we have the government using its legislative might by invoking something which we all consider—and I know the House leader of the Liberal Party considers—to be wrong. It is wrong. It is morally wrong. It is legislatively wrong. It could have come to some kind of conclusion, but you chose to use your legislative might on this night and deny the members who are here this very evening an opportunity to experience Niagara, which you yourself said, Mr. House leader—you made a statement and I think it needs to be repeated: "There are two kinds of people: There are those who live in Niagara and those who wish they did." Well, I don't live there, and perhaps I wished I was with them now, but I am not. I am here—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Go.

1910

Mr. Prue: No, no, I'm not going to go. My duty requires me to speak to what you are doing, this reprehensible act that you call closure, this reprehensible act that when you were in opposition, you said you would never do and that you have literally done three or four times in the last two weeks.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No. Three or four times in the last two weeks, and you're going to continue to do this. That is the sad tale. It may not have been done much in the past, but here we are coming to the end of the legislative session, and here we are with a government in crisis that is literally, on every single bill, whether it is contentious or not, invoking closure so that the opposition cannot speak to it, so that no one can voice their legitimate concerns, and so that it is rammed through in a day or two of public hearings that are generally outside of the purview of those who have the most to talk about. In this case, water, it will be people around the Great Lakes basin; in the case of endangered species, a night or two ago, it was the people in northern Ontario. They literally have no opportunity whatsoever to debate the merits or demerits of this particular bill. So here we have the government House leader standing here telling us that he's sorry, that he shouldn't do it, that we should perhaps quote him from all the times in the past when he said how wrong it was, but he does it anyway.

I have to ask the government House leader and I have to ask everybody on the government bench—which is probably going to, at some point, applaud what you're doing, because that's what government backbenchers do. There are three potential real problems with this bill, three questions that each of you should be asking yourselves. The first one is, what is the potential negative outcome of the extensive and vague exceptions that you have made? I'm going to go into those. This is a bill that has potential negative outcomes and extensive and vague exceptions. It is built within the body of the bill. It is arcane in some places. It is so difficult to understand. It is written in the language of bureaucratese, so that even the people, I'm sure, who work for the government can't really understand it. The lawyers must have had a field day going through it line by line and making the most obtuse legal language in order to present a bill that is so incredibly difficult for ordinary people to understand.

I have to ask the government, when you were producing this bill, did you ask the question why the water fee is not specified? Did you at all stop and wonder why the water fee is not specified? We have heard over the last number of months of debate on this the figure of \$3.71 per million litres of water. When I first looked at this, I started to laugh. I could not understand why this government would produce a bill and ram it through the Legislature so that they could recoup the magnificent sum of \$3.71 for a million litres.

Just so that people understand how much this is, how much a million litres of water is, how much it costs for the average citizen in a city like Toronto to purchase a million litres—and I know for a fact how much is involved; at least, I think I have a pretty good idea. I am fortunate enough to have a small swimming pool in my backyard. It is a pool that holds 80,000 litres of water. I know that 12 swimming pools like my own would equal a million litres of water. If I could buy 12 swimming pools full of water to fill my swimming pool each year before the swimming pool season for \$3.71, I would

think that I had died and gone to heaven, because in the city of Toronto, paying ordinary water rates to fill the pool when it is empty, from the bottom to the top, costs me a couple of hundred dollars. If I were to buy 12 swimming pools of that water, it would cost me literally thousands of dollars for the water that would fill those pools. Yet here is a government that seems to be hell-bent to sell it for \$3.71 per million litres to some of the largest conglomerates on the face of this planet. I don't understand what this is all about. I read this bill and I think this is a giveaway of our natural resources here in Canada. I have to question that. I'm going to come back to that, but that's the second question: that I don't understand the rush and I don't understand why the water fee is not specified and why it may be as low as \$3.71 for a million litres.

There is no mention whatsoever within the body of this bill about small and medium water takers, those who would take amounts of water significantly less than a million litres of water a day: nothing about the small ones at less than 50,000 or the medium ones at less than 329,000. None of it is mentioned: how they're going to take the water, the fee they're going to take.

I looked at the problems with this bill. If you will bear with me, the problems that are contained in this bill have not been answered. They've not been answered adequately at all. I know this will go to committee and I know that some people will come forward and will talk about the problems, and I can only hope in my fondest hope that the Liberal government, in invoking closure, will have answers to some of these and will put forward a whole plethora of amendments, dozens and dozens and dozens of amendments, to their seriously flawed bill that will try to assuage some of the fears that ordinary Canadians have.

Just to read some of those, and I've tried to go through them, there is no definition of "consumptive use" with respect to diversions that could mean removal of water from the watershed alone or the water that was used from removal. There is absolutely no definition of this consumptive use, and I wonder why the government chose not to put that in the bill itself. "Consumptive use" is used many, many times throughout the bill, but there is no definition of it. I quote from the bill: "It has been demonstrated that conservation of existing water supplies is not a feasible, environmentally sound and cost effective alternative...." This is found in 34.6, subsection (2), (iii) and (v). I mean, this is how arcane it gets when you're starting to read all of this.

I have to ask, who determines the feasibility? Is it an internal or an external authority? What is the standard or the benchmark of the feasibility? These are difficult questions. I have not heard any debate. This has only been the subject of debate for a number of hours. No one has talked, on the government side, about what this is all about. And yet they use closure to ram it through without answering these very key and poignant questions. They use closure to stifle anyone asking this and asking what is going to happen. It is not nearly so important that I ask

these questions, although I have ample opportunity to do so in this Legislature, but it is the environmental groups that have been denied this. It is the environmental groups and the people across this province who are the most concerned who will be denied an opportunity because of this closure motion, because it in fact limits the amount of debate and the number of people who will be allowed to come before the committee at that stage.

I turn my attention to the omissions from the bill.

There is no guideline for the quality of water that is to be returned to the basin from whence it has been taken. So people can take the water out and there is no guideline as to how the quality of the water is to be monitored when it is returned. As an example, if it goes through a large factory and it contains contaminants on the way out, there is no guideline that the water must be returned in a better condition than when it was taken.

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Now, we know that when water is taken from Lake Ontario and when that water goes through the system in the towns and villages and cities around Lake Ontario—or Lake Erie or Lake Huron or Lake Superior or the Niagara River or the St. Lawrence River—those towns and cities have an obligation under law to take the water, to use it for all good purpose, whether that be for consumption, whether it be for industrial use, whether it be for farming or whether it be for any use whatsoever—for watering lawns—but when it returns through the sewer systems and back into the water stream, before that happens, it must be treated, and when it is returned to the water stream, in literally every case it is required that it be in the same or better condition than it was before it was taken out. There is nothing in this bill that has a guideline for the quality of water that is to be returned to the system. We have had laws in this province for years, for decades, perhaps for a century, that require that water be returned in the same or better condition, and this bill omits that.

I don't know why the government has done this. I don't know why you've done it. I don't know why it's not here. All I'm asking is, why are you invoking closure before you have answered this question? If you're going to fix it up, then whoever stands up next on the government side, tell me that you have a plan and tell me you have an amendment. At least assuage my fears, if not the fears of those people in the environmental movement who look upon this and wonder what this government is doing.

There's no mention of adaptation to permits and transfers with respect to the current science on climate change and the effects on water levels. In fact, this bill will force Ontario again to lag behind other jurisdictions on adaptation or even consideration for climate change.

Now, if this was a landmark bill, if this government could stand up and say that this was going to put Toronto—not Toronto; Ontario—on the map—see, sometimes I become self-centric here because I've lived here my whole life. If this is going to put Ontario on the map, if we are going to have a water bill that is going to really do

something about climate change, if we're going to be a world leader, even a North American leader, even a Canadian leader, even a central east leader or a central west leader, whatever Ontario wants to be, I would gladly say that this was a sign forward, but in fact what is happening here will produce laws in Ontario which will not put us to the forefront, but will actually make us lag behind literally every other jurisdiction around the Great Lakes, whether those be Canadian jurisdictions or American ones.

I don't know why the government wants to force this through. I don't know why you planned this. I don't know what you have in mind. But I have to tell you that people who are watching this, far more knowledgeable on this than I, have some very real concerns about this.

There's no mention in your bill of the phased-in conservation charges for small and medium industries that make up over 95% of the businesses in Ontario. You've dealt with the really big guys in a small way, you've dealt with the really small people in a way, but you haven't dealt with the 95% of the small businesses, and they seem to be singularly left out of your bill. I don't know why you've done this, and I don't know why you're forcing it through closure.

So I have to ask again of the government House leader, who is so reluctant to do this and so embarrassed almost when he has to stand up here and do it, why he is doing it when the bill is this severely flawed.

We go on to the next one. There is no mention of the standards for consumptive use and no indication of how average consumption will be calculated. Will it be an industry average or will it be a regional average? There's nothing in there. We don't know. Will this be left to regulation? Will this be changed in committee? Will you ignore it altogether? We don't know.

This is where the bill resides at this point, and it is a seriously flawed portion of the bill when you leave out those basic questions that I think almost any municipal politician can ask and will ask and also which every environmentalist who is concerned about water quality and the sale of water in this province will be hot on their heels to ask you. I hope you have an answer.

I hope there are 15 amendments to this when the government sits down over the one or two days that you've set aside for committee debate. I hope you listen to the opposition and to the people who come there and not just do what usually happens: The government produces three or four amendments which make the backbenchers happy and ignores everything else that is said either by the opposition or, more importantly than the opposition, by the people of Ontario who are directly affected. I have no guarantee, nor do they, when you have limited the scope of the committee in such a way, that this will actually be done.

I go down and there's no indication of the funding structure for the implementation of this framework. You have not set aside any funds to implement the framework that you have set up in the bill.

This goes down to the whole thing. Here we are. What is going to happen at the end of the night, when this bill is ordered to committee? When the closure motion is successful, when the government uses its massive majority in this House—its 69 seats—when all the backbenchers run in here at 9:20 and vote for the bill, and it is ordered, this is what's going to happen. Anyone who watches the legislative channel knows that this happens literally every night. The government doesn't allow these bills not to proceed. They order closure, they get closure. The backbenchers vote for closure, oftentimes—and I mean no disrespect to them—having not heard the debate and oftentimes not even knowing, really, what is contained within the body of the bill. They will vote for the closure and I will watch it unfold tonight at 9:21. It will happen.

But in doing so, do they have the kind of knowledge, do they have the understanding that in the actions that will take place at 9:21 tonight, they are in fact, through this bill, discouraging water conservation? Do they have the knowledge and do they have the will, in passing this bill, to approve and to promulgate and to make important things like the big pipe diversion? Because that's going to happen too as a result of this bill.

We know that all the communities around Toronto are very upset about the big pipe diversion and what that is causing: the drying up of the wells, the drying up of the streams, the caving in, in some places, of the land. It's all there. Do the government backbenchers who are going to be here at 9:21 understand that this bill is going to allow this to happen?

I have to add, do they understand that instead of conserving, municipalities will pipe in water from elsewhere? Because of this bill, if they cannot conserve the water, there are always alternatives, whether that means piping in the water from a distant lake or another of the Great Lakes—if that means bringing the water over hundreds of kilometres—then that will be an option that municipalities will start to explore. This government is forcing the transfer of water from long distances through the passage of this bill. I have to ask if the government backbenchers understand that this will set a precedent for municipalities to divert waste water. Because we expect that to happen as a result as well.

We're looking also at moving water from one lake to another to service sprawl, and it does not speak to increased water protection. I don't know what is contained in the body of this bill—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue:—because that's what I see is in there now. I don't know what's going to happen in committee.

I can see my good friend Gilles Bisson telling me that he wants to keep at least 20 minutes for him. I will conclude this in about three minutes.

I don't know what is contained in the body of this bill that will allow me or those who are concerned about this to feel any better. Quite literally, there are many problems with this bill. Quite literally, the government feels very uneasy about it. Quite literally, the government

House leader, in invoking closure here tonight, feels very uneasy about what he is doing.

I have to ask the government backbenchers who are here listening tonight whether you feel uneasy, whether you have asked any of these same questions that I have posed to you tonight, whether or not you feel totally comfortable that this bill will not sell out the birthright of Ontario to those large bottlers of water, whether you feel that it will allow the municipalities an opportunity to pipe in water from elsewhere, whether you feel that the waste water that is returned to the system will be as clean as or cleaner than what it is.

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We know that we've had many, many people speak against this. We have had Mary Muter, a spokesperson for the Georgian Bay Association—and I'm not going to quote them all because I'm mindful of the time—who is very upset about this bill. We know that we have Tim Morris in the *Toronto Star*—"Great Lakes Agreement Could Spring a Leak" in April of 2007—who outlines his concerns. We know that the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance has outlined their concerns and quoted the Biodiversity Project, 2001. We know that the Sierra Club of Canada—"Sprawl Hurts Us All," February 2003—has talked about what this bill will or will not do. We know that the whole diversion from Lake Simcoe/Georgian Bay/Lake Huron has been talked about many times. These are many experts who know far more about it than I.

I am so severely disappointed at the government House leader in his statement here tonight because I know he is severely disappointed in what he has done. I know that in invoking this closure, he has gone against everything he has said in this House about this process for the last 30 years. In invoking this closure, he is ashamed of what his government is doing. He is doing it because, as the government House leader, he is required to do it, because a decision has been made in cabinet and perhaps in caucus to do it. But in the end, the only real losers in Ontario will be the people who rely on this water, and the only real losers will be the people of Ontario who expected so much more from this government.

I thank those who listened for their attention, and I leave the balance of time for my good friend from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): I can't believe that government members would not want to get up and speak on one of their own time allocation motions. I would think that you probably have reams to say about the need to invoke closure on yet another piece of legislation. I am just shocked. I would have thought that members of the government reigning party would have run to their mikes, they would have been standing here and saying, "We have to do time allocation for the following reasons," but not a whimper from this government. I'm just saying: I am shocked. I'm very surprised.

I want to take this opportunity in this closure motion to talk about water, because this is about a water bill. I just want to say that I had a bit of a chance to talk about this a little earlier today, but it's a fresh crew, and maybe

I'm going to be able to convince more members of the assembly now that we have a different crew than was here this afternoon, and maybe I can work you all over and make you think about what it is that the Environmental Commissioner had to say. You get that warm, fuzzy feeling when I say that, don't you, Mr. Whip? That's great. I love that.

I just have to say I was in Sudbury earlier this morning. The Environmental Commissioner gave a report in regard to the state of both the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment. It was interesting, what he had to say, because what he said is what we've been saying in this House for some time on the opposition benches, and certainly what OPSEU has been saying for some time—the union that represents the workers—and certainly what a lot of the public have been saying for a long time in regard to both the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment having a hard time trying to deliver the mandated services that they've been given to deliver by this assembly.

Let me explain. This assembly from time to time—as we are tonight—decides on a new initiative. We say, "We're going to make water regulations better for the people of Ontario." So we go out and we draft legislation. In this legislation, we figure out better ways of being able to ensure that drinking water is safer for the people of Ontario. And there's hardly a member of this assembly who has a problem with that; there's hardly a member of the public who has a problem with that. But I'll tell you where the problem lies: We pass a law here at Queen's Park and then we pass it onto somebody else to foot the bill, and the Ministry of the Environment is not given additional dollars to do what we're telling them to do through this assembly. It's a huge problem.

We take a look at what the Environmental Commissioner said today. The Environmental Commissioner was very direct. He talked about, for example, that at the Ministry of Natural Resources over the past number of years the funding has not kept up with the mandated services they've been given to carry out by this assembly. He's saying, "Listen, you, as legislators, have gone and said to the Ministry of Natural Resources, 'Here is another new initiative that you have to put in place.'" For example, we've done a whole bunch of work under the last couple of governments—under the Harris government, under the Liberals and under the NDP, to a certain degree—to expand our park services. But since 1994 we've not seen commensurate increases in budgets to give the Ministry of Natural Resources the dollars it needs to carry out that new responsibility.

The Conservative government came to power and under Lands for Life created a whole bunch of protected spaces in our natural environment—not a bad initiative, but again, without any way of making sure that the ministry is able to deal with that and to properly care for those set-asides. The ministry, for example, currently has endangered species legislation no longer in this House because it was time-allocated into committee last night.

Again, I don't see anybody at the OFIA, I don't see anybody in the agricultural community, I don't see members in this House opposed to the principle. We all say we need to do more to make sure that we protect endangered species. You'd be crazy to argue otherwise. However, we're not giving the Ministry of Natural Resources the dollars to make sure that it's able to carry through the mandate that we're giving them by legislation through this assembly.

That's what the Environmental Commissioner was saying today. He's basically saying that this assembly more and more gives ministries like MOE and MNR additional responsibilities to carry out but doesn't give them the dollars by which to do it. As a result, the ministries are not able to do what they were mandated to do.

A good example of that at the Ministry of Natural Resources is exactly what's happening with the endangered species legislation. Here we are passing legislation that most people can support, and then at the end of the day we don't have the dollars to compensate people who are going to lose access to their lands, either in the forest industry, the mining industry or in the agricultural industry, or the private property that could be impacted by allowing habitat to be defined under the endangered species legislation. What do you do if, let's say, you have private property—and your private property has to be either a farm, a cottage or whatever it might be—and all of a sudden you're told that you can't do certain activities on that property because it's been declared under this legislation to be endangered habitat? That should be compensated in some way. Do we see a commensurate amount of money given by this government to make sure that we compensate those people who have bought land under the understanding of the law of the day and all of a sudden they find out they're being expropriated by the back door? No, there is none of that.

Are we going to give the Ministry of Natural Resources the dollars it needs to enforce endangered species legislation, to do the scientific work that needs to be done to determine if a species is at risk and to what degree and what needs to be done to make sure that we can help that species repopulate and become strong again? There's no money being tied to the legislation.

If the law was broken, what money do we have to make sure that conservation officers and others are able to go out and enforce the legislation that we pass in this House? Members will know that this last winter, enforcement officers of the Ministry of Natural Resources had to hold bake sales in order to—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Gilles, it's five minutes to the motion for adjournment.

Mr. Bisson: Oh no, really? I only count four here, Peter. I'm just reminding you of the numbers.

I just say to the members of this assembly that you've got in this particular situation the ministry being given responsibilities it can't fulfill. I just go back to the point I was making before the suggestion of the bells, and that is that last winter, the Ministry of Natural Resources con-

servation officers held bake sales in communities like Hearst, Kapuskasing and Timmins and across northern Ontario and said, "Let's raise dollars in order to have money so we can buy gas and put it in our trucks so, as conservation officers, we can go out and do our job that we were mandated by this Legislature to do." Now if you want an MNR conservation officer to go out and do patrols in the bush, you've got to dial 1-800-I've-got-a-problem-in-the-bush-come-and-check-me. That's how it basically works now. It's a snitch line.

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I'm just saying, as I said earlier in debate this afternoon, that what stops people from breaking the law is the fear of being caught. If you don't have conservation officers in the bush, then the laws will be broken. How do you expect endangered species legislation to be enforced if you don't have the dollars to support the conservation officers and others who are going to have to police this legislation?

This assembly has a really bad track record of passing legislation that is well-intended but not giving the ministries whose legislation it is that's being passed the ability to enforce or do what the legislation says it should do. I'm just saying, it's high time that this government understands to what degree we are not supporting our civil servants and others who are supposedly doing a job. It brings you to the debate of: What is it that the government should be doing?

I think this is a little bit political. Quite frankly, we've got ministers of the crown who stand and introduce legislation in this House in order to have a great big press conference to say, "Look at me. I'm great for endangered species. I'm the best thing since sliced bread." But at the end of the day, it doesn't mean anything. Why? Because you'll never be able to enforce it. There aren't the dollars at the MNR to give the staff the ability to enforce the legislation. There isn't the capacity within the ministry to do what it is that the legislation says you should do. So I guess we're just going to leave people up to their own—can you imagine driving down the highway and we don't have OPP officers, and we say, "Next time you see somebody speeding, pull them over and give them a ticket"? This would not be a very good thing, would it? At the end of the day, you have to have the people in the field who are able to do what needs to be done when it comes to enforcement.

So I just say to members of this assembly: You're going to have to give your heads a shake. I know I'm there and I know my caucus colleagues are there, but if we're going to give the ministries a responsibility—

Mr. Kormos: Why don't the Liberals want to work tonight?

Mr. Bisson: I don't know. That's a good question, why they don't want to work.

Mr. Kormos: Why don't the Liberals want to work tonight?

Mr. Bisson: I can give you 10 minutes of time if you want it.

Mr. Kormos: How come the Liberals aren't—

Mr. Bisson: I take it this is a call for time on the clock, Mr. Kormos.

Mr. Kormos: How come the Liberals don't want to work tonight?

Mr. Bisson: I'm being heckled by my own; this is terrible. I felt it last week, but it was through the media. That's a different story.

Mr. Kormos: How many Liberals are here?

Mr. Bisson: I would just say that—

Mr. Kormos: Are there any Liberals here?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Doesn't he like sports or something?

Mr. Bisson: I don't know what he likes, but he's heckling me right now.

Mr. Kormos: Are there any Liberals here even in the Legislature? Let's hear from them.

Interjection: You will.

Mr. Kormos: Okay.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins—James Bay actually has the floor.

I'll return it to the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: I was wondering when I was going to get it back. It took about five minutes. Pretty good; you did well on that one.

I would just say to my friends across the way that you need to make sure that in the end, if you mandate action by a ministry to do what has to be done, you need to make sure that at the end of the day you give them the resources to do it.

The next thing I want to talk about, which is a little bit related—well, it's time allocation, right? So it's very related—is how we draft legislation in this House. It really irks me, because the way we do legislation in this House is somewhat backwards. It would seem to me that if a government or a member has a great idea—let's use endangered species legislation as a good example. Let's say that we or a member or a caucus or whoever decides that endangered species legislation is the way to go. Wouldn't it be a lot better if, as a Legislature, we were to say, "Okay, let's take our time and do this right"? Rather than the government going out on its own and consulting whom it wants—in other words, not consulting people who may not agree with it—let's have a public process that's transparent. So what we do is we charge a committee of this assembly to go out after first reading, where we would table a motion or a bill that sets the direction that we want to go and we say to the committee, "Take a couple of weeks, take a month, whatever it takes, to go out and consult with the broader public and those who are knowledgeable in the environmental movement and other movements, the forestry sector etc., about what endangered species legislation should look like," that we charge ourselves, as an assembly—and I would say, it would have to be by proportion, so that we don't end up in a situation where, at the end of the day, a party that's elected with 43% is able to go in and charge a committee with a majority. It should be that everybody has a bit of an equal say so that we can actually go out and do our jobs as legislators and say, "We have, as a principle, the

want to develop legislation to protect endangered species." We say, "How are we able to do that so that it makes some sense?" Then we can talk about legislation that's workable, first of all. We can talk about how we properly resource the Ministry of Natural Resources and others to police the legislation, and then bring that all back in legislation for second reading when we've had a chance to vet it.

Instead, what we do in this place is, the minister says, "Oh, I've got a great idea." Normally it's politically driven. Normally it's about developing wedge issues against one party or another. That's what happened with endangered species. The government figured, "Oh, what a great way to introduce legislation where we can wedge the Tories and the New Democrats on one side of the issue and us on the other side." I guess the problem is, they didn't realize that both New Democrats and Tories are not opposed to endangered species legislation. I guess that plan didn't work so well. But what it's done is created bad legislation.

I don't mean to take any exception with any of my friends in the environmental movement, but what this government has done is, it has gone out and consulted for a year, yes; it has talked to lots of people, yes. But it has talked mostly to people it wanted to talk to, who were in support of the legislation. I believe that you have to listen to both sides. All I'm saying is, a more sane way of developing legislation so that you don't end up in time allocation, as we are now, is to charge the assembly with the responsibility of referring a matter to committee where there's no clear majority by the government to control it so that we can actually go out and do a decent job of discussing with the public what it is that we're trying to do and bring back some product at the end of the day that makes sense and is able to go as far as the public is prepared to go, so that we have legislation that's workable, that's not going to be before the courts for another 10 or 15 years. That's my prediction. I say it here tonight: Endangered species legislation will cause litigation for 10 to 15 years—again, not because I'm opposed, but because the legislation is flawed. Because of the way we draft legislation, we do a very bad job of taking into account how we're able to develop legislation so that it's balanced.

Mr. Speaker, my time is coming to an end. I know that you and other members of this assembly would like me to go on longer and I know that you are just feeling so hurt inside that I'm not going to take my full time, but I just want to make sure that I leave this last time as an opportunity for government members and the Conservative Party to get up and speak on time allocation because I know the government feels very strongly about its need to time-allocate, and I'm going to make sure I give them some time to be able to speak on that matter.

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's a pleasure to speak this evening and support my colleague the Minister of the Environment and speak on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources in support of Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007, Bill 198.

First of all, I want to say that I appreciate the official opposition being prepared to deal with this bill, but it appears again that we don't have the co-operation of the third party. As Ontarians are aware, it takes everybody's co-operation to make this process work. But I do want to say that, despite this closure motion now, we will be having committee hearings. We will be going through that process.

I want to talk specifically about Bill 198, to highlight some of the important aspects and features of this bill. The proposed legislation to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act is another major step forward in conserving and protecting the waters of the Great Lakes basin for future generations of Ontarians. If passed, the legislation would implement the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, an agreement signed 16 months ago in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, by Premier McGuinty and representatives from Quebec and eight Great Lakes US states.

In the Great Lakes agreement, 10 jurisdictions in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin agreed to protect one of the continent's most precious natural resources. They agreed to do that by prohibiting water diversions out of the basin, subject to rare, strictly regulated exceptions promoting water conservation, reinforcing basin-wide environmental standards for water-takings and improving science-based decision-making.

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We all know the Great Lakes and the rivers and underground waters that flow into them are vital to Ontario's economy, environment and to our culture. We also know we in Ontario are stewards of only part of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin, and Ontarians share this responsibility for the basin with Quebec and eight US states, as well as our respective federal governments. At the same time, we face a number of challenges in sustainably managing Ontario's waters.

Climate change is resulting in unpredictable shifts in temperature and weather. Next door in the United States, we have more people moving to the arid southwestern US, making it more likely that those states will be seeking new sources of water supply. And we know the global population continues to grow, increasing the demand for water worldwide. More than one commentator has certainly predicted that water will become the oil of the 21st century.

Ontario's strong controls on water use have already made it a leader in water management in the Great Lakes region. This province banned diversions out of the Great Lakes basin and Ontario's other water basins years before the Great Lakes agreement was even signed. But Ontario laws only apply to water within Ontario's borders, and water obviously doesn't respect political boundaries. Yet existing international laws, while important, don't give us all the protection we need. For example, the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 between Canada and the United States applies to the Great Lakes and other boundary waters, but not to other water in the

basin or other lakes and rivers or underground waterways.

It's clear that effective protection for the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin requires action from all 10 jurisdictions in the basin. That's why Ontario has deeply committed to negotiating a set of rules on water use and transfer for all provinces and states in the basin. When it became clear that other jurisdictions were willing to negotiate a basin-wide agreement, this province recognized it as a rare, even once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to achieve regional co-operation in managing these interconnected waters. Such an agreement would have substantial long-term benefits for all Ontarians. The positive result was the signing in 2005 of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. The agreement commits each of the provinces and states to seek and adopt—to implement, as well, terms of the agreement within their own borders—this particular law. Ontario has begun the process through the legislation introduced by Minister Broten and Minister Ramsay which was recently announced.

The introduction of this act is an important milestone in a long and challenging journey, involving years of work by many parties.

I'd like to take a few minutes to comment on the historic perspective of this legislation. In the early 1980s, the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and the eight Great Lakes states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, became concerned about threats to Great Lakes waters from proposals to divert large quantities of water out of the Great Lakes basin.

At the same time, concerns were being raised by the International Joint Commission. The IJC is an international and independent bi-national organization established by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. Its purpose is to help prevent or resolve disputes relating to the use and quality of boundary waters, and to advise Canada and the United States on related questions. The IJC and other organizations had conducted studies showing that without careful and prudent management, the future development of diversions and consumptive uses of water resources of the Great Lakes basin could significantly damage the environment, economy and welfare of the Great Lakes region.

In response to those concerns, in 1985 the two Premiers and eight governors signed the Great Lakes Charter. The charter is a good-faith agreement that aims to protect and conserve Great Lakes basin waters. It sets out important principles shared by the 10 jurisdictions; for example, the recognition that the waters of the Great Lakes basin are interconnected and part of a single hydrologic system.

The Great Lakes Charter also recognizes, "The most effective means of protecting, conserving and managing the water resources of the Great Lakes is through the joint pursuit of unified and co-operative principles, policies and programs mutually agreed upon, enacted and

adhered to by each and every Great Lakes state and province" involved.

As a result of the charter, the Great Lakes states and provinces have consulted with each other on significant water use proposals and shared information on water use to assist in decision-making.

The Great Lakes Charter was a significant achievement, but it was a broad and general agreement, and that became a concern in the late 1990s. At that time, the Great Lakes provinces and states developed renewed concerns about proposals to export water in bulk. In 2000, the IJC issued a report stating that removals and diversions of water from the Great Lakes basin represent a permanent loss of water from the basin. The report called for stronger protections against removals and diversions and consumptive water uses as well as better conservation practices.

These events led the provinces and states to develop a supplementary agreement, known as the Great Lakes Charter Annex. Signed in 2001, the charter annex reinforced and built upon the principles of the Great Lakes Charter. But it stated outright that, in spite of the voluntary principles agreed to by the 10 jurisdictions in the Great Lakes, the waters of the basin remained at risk of damage from environmental disruptions and unsustainable practices in water resource management. It committed the provinces and states to work out more comprehensive protections for Great Lakes basin waters within three years. The charter annex was specific, and protection measures were to include an environmental standard to guide decisions about proposed water uses.

To carry out the commitments made in the Great Lakes Charter Annex, the provinces and states set up a water management working group. The working group was instructed to negotiate draft agreements to implement measures that would offer more binding protections for Great Lakes basin waters. Those measures were to include a new common, resource-based conservation standard that would apply to new proposals for water withdrawals, and increases in existing withdrawals, from the waters of the Great Lakes basin. The group included representatives from each jurisdiction and was supported by an advisory committee of stakeholders. The Ontario government Ministries of Natural Resources and Intergovernmental Affairs represented the province on the charter annex working group, in consultation with other key ministries, including the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Food, and Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Work on developing and implementing the agreement began in 2001, and it certainly wasn't easy. The working group was simultaneously developing two agreements: a good faith agreement among all provinces and states to implement the agreement in their own laws and an interstate compact that would legally bind the eight US states once it was approved by the US Congress. Two agreements were required because the two provinces and eight states by themselves could not sign a treaty across international borders.

Another difficulty in successfully negotiating agreements was the major difference among the laws of the 10 states and the provinces on the use and transfer of water. Ontario, with some of the toughest rules in the region, persuaded the other jurisdictions to significantly strengthen protection measures in the draft agreements. By the time the three years allowed for negotiation were up, Ontario was still not satisfied that the measures in the agreement were in fact strong enough. Although they were not in accord, the 10 jurisdictions decided to release drafts of the agreement for public comment and discussion.

That was when Ontario citizens, stakeholders and First Nations did their part. At public meetings held by the Ministry of Natural Resources and through letters and other communications, Ontarians told us loud and clear that they wanted a ban on diversions of water out of the Great Lakes basin. They knew this province already banned diversions of water out of the basin and they wanted the US states to meet the same high standard that we were meeting. If I could use this expression, it was a watershed moment in negotiations of the Great Lakes agreement.

In November 2004, the Minister of Natural Resources announced that Ontario would not sign the Great Lakes agreement unless changes were made to enhance the level of protection for the waters of the Great Lakes basin. Our negotiators returned to the table with the message that the Ontario public was demanding more, and we fully supported this position.

It was around that time that Ontario decided to form its own advisory panel. Its members included environmental, industrial and agricultural groups, municipalities, academics as well as other experts. As it turned out, the support and advice of the annex advisory panel during the negotiations was vital to Ontario in our pursuit of stronger agreements. This government continues to be grateful for the time and effort each of these individuals and organizations have contributed. We couldn't have negotiated as well as we did without their ongoing involvement, so we want to thank them for that.

The province also conducted meetings with First Nations communities and political organizations in the basin, and representatives of those groups participated in basin-wide meetings of First Nations to discuss these agreements.

When we returned to the negotiations, we did not back down on what we knew was very important to Ontarians. By June 2005, we had succeeded in negotiating stronger agreements. The new draft agreements would provide a virtual ban on diversions of water from the basin, with very limited exceptions that would be very strictly regulated.

2000

However, the 10 jurisdictions had not reached consensus on some key and critical issues. Again, we released the draft agreements and held meetings with the public and First Nations to allow members of the public, stakeholders and other First Nation groups to express

their opinions on this issue. This time, I'm pleased to say, the reaction was much more positive, and after a final round of negotiations, we achieved consensus among the 10 provinces and states. We released the final agreement and compact in November 2005, and Premier McGuinty signed the agreement the following month.

I was certainly very pleased, as was the Minister of Natural Resources, that this long and arduous process came to a successful conclusion, and I know Ontario's negotiating team from the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs shares those feelings.

I'd like to just briefly outline some of the key elements of the final Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. Through the agreement, the 10 provinces and states agreed to provide strong new protections for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin waters. They agreed to ban diversions, with rare, strictly regulated exceptions such as for communities that straddle the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin boundary, or boundaries between Great Lakes watersheds. They agreed to strengthen water conservation through programs in each state and province. They also agreed to establish a stronger new environmental standard for regulating water uses across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin states and provinces, and build the information and science needed to support sound decision-making. They agreed to build regional collaboration, for example in the review of water management and conservation programs. To oversee water uses across the basin, the 10 provinces and states agreed to create a regional body made up of representatives from each jurisdiction. They agreed to provide a stronger voice for Ontario, its citizens and First Nations in the regional review of water use proposals and other jurisdictions for exceptions to the prohibition against diversions. And finally, they agreed to recognize the principles of precaution, ecosystem protection and the consideration of cumulative impacts and climate change uncertainties.

These are significant commitments that will protect the integrity of the Great Lakes basin for future generations. In the 16 months since the Minister of Natural Resources stood in the House and informed the members that the Premier had signed this historic agreement, this government has been working hard to develop legislation that, if passed, will enable the implementation of this agreement in Ontario.

The proposed legislation is now before the House, and it is the critical next step in conserving and protecting the waters of the Great Lakes basin and all of our water resources for the long-term environmental, social and economic well-being of Ontario.

If passed, Bill 198 would elevate Ontario's ban on diversions out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin, the Nelson River basin, the Hudson Bay basin, from a regulation to part of an act, to emphasize the importance of the prohibition. Bill 198 would also introduce a ban on new and increased diversions of water

from one Great Lakes watershed to another, known as intra-basin transfers, unless strict environmental criteria are in fact met. And to give the government more latitude to control intra-basin transfers, the proposed legislation would enable the government to further restrict such transfers. Bill 198 would allow Ontario to pass regulations that, for example, could lower the threshold at which water transferred between two Great Lakes watersheds must be returned to a source of watershed, or introduce additional environmental criteria to respond to cumulative impacts and the effects of climate change.

If Bill 198 is passed, the government also proposes to hold discussions with stakeholders on interim control measures as the legislative framework is put in place—

Interjection.

Mr. Oraziatti: —and any such measures would involve full public consultation, as the member from Peterborough is indicating.

In addition, Bill 198 would permit Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states to appeal to the Environmental Review Tribunal or seek judicial review of Ontario decisions on water withdrawals and diversions subject to the agreement. This section would not come into force until other Great Lakes jurisdictions provide Ontario with a similar right of access in their court system.

Bill 198 would create authority to pass regulations to support the implementation of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. For example, additional regulations would require measures to promote water conservation and water use efficiency, and introduce an environmental decision-making standard for the review of proposed water withdrawals. Bill 198 would create authority to prescribe additional criteria to respond to periodic assessments of cumulative impacts, including criteria relating to climate change or other significant threats to the Great Lakes basin. And Bill 198 would enable Ontario, for the first time, to charge for water taken or used for industrial or commercial purposes and extend the requirements for permits to take water.

In December 2006, Premier McGuinty became chair of the Great Lakes regional body for 2007—making this a highly appropriate time to pass this legislation.

It's also very good news that on March 27, the Minister of Natural Resources signed a memorandum of understanding with Grand Council Chief John Beaucage, on behalf of 42 Anishinabek nations that will assist Ontario as it implements the agreement.

Throughout the process of negotiating the Great Lakes agreement, we have been diligent in working with our First Nations—including the Anishinabek Nation—the public and representatives of different interest groups.

As we move ahead with this important initiative, we need to build stronger relationships with First Nations and their political organizations, and the memorandum of understanding will help make that a reality. This memorandum will build on the momentum we have already achieved, ensure that traditional Anishinabek principles

and perspectives are considered, and enhance the implementation process.

In closing, I want to say that Bill 198, the proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007, will continue Ontario's leadership role in protecting Great Lakes basin waters. If passed, it will represent significant progress toward the implementation of Ontario's commitments under the Great Lakes agreement

But there is more to do. This government will continue to engage the annex advisory panel and Ontario's First Nations and to consult with the public, as we work to develop the regulations and policies to support this very important piece of legislation.

Through it all, we'll remain diligent in protecting Ontario's interests in the waters of the Great Lakes basin and the waters all across the province of Ontario. It's a task that promises to remain a significant challenge in the years ahead, but by introducing legislation that will implement the historic Great Lakes agreement, we are continuing to move forward to meet that challenge and to

protect the waters that are central to the history and to the future of all Ontarians.

I just want to recognize a couple of folks from Sault Ste. Marie who are in the members' east gallery: Dr. Arthur Perlini and David Marasco, who work at Algoma University College.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 343. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

Those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 2008.

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Mercredi 25 avril 2007



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 April 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of John Tory, the leader of the official opposition, and the Ontario PC caucus, I'm pleased to acknowledge National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week.

Ontario is a world leader in successful transplants, but this year alone there are over 1,750 Ontario patients who are on the waiting list for life-saving transplants, and one person dies every three days waiting for a transplant in this province. We have reason to be encouraged, however, as Ontarians are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of organ donation thanks in large part to organizations such as the London Transplant Gift of Life Association, who join us in the Legislature today.

I also want to acknowledge the work of the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations, under the leadership of Dr. Ted Boadway, which released its report last week containing 26 specific recommendations that, when implemented, will increase organ donations and save lives.

I call on the Premier and the Minister of Health to make it a priority of the government to implement those recommendations without delay. A good start would be to pass into law Bill 67, which is before the Legislature and is entirely consistent with the panel's recommendations. That will be a clear signal that the Ontario government has heard and is responding to the call for action on this important issue.

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'd like to invite all members and all Ontarians to come and experience world-class live theatre in my hometown of Stratford.

The Stratford Festival's 2007 season, running until November, is well under way and includes four plays by Shakespeare, two musicals, one revival, and seven works new to the festival. I'm delighted that Premier McGuinty visited Stratford just last weekend to enjoy a preview of the musical *Oklahoma*.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 avril 2007

Drawing audiences of more than 600,000 people each year, the festival season includes a wonderful array of 14 productions offered at our four theatres.

If that were not enough, the season also includes a full program of festival fringe activities, including concert recitals, discussion sessions and readings by celebrated authors.

I want to thank the government for its continued investment in both tourism and arts and culture initiatives in the province of Ontario, including the \$41 million of proposed new spending outlined in our most recent provincial budget.

I want to entreat all members to visit Stratford.

Finally, I want to recognize the amazing tenure of artistic director Richard Monette. After an unprecedented 14 seasons as the artistic director, preceded by 20 seasons on the stage, he will be genuinely missed after his retirement at the end of this season. Richard has given so much of his heart, soul and talent to the Stratford Festival that no amount of applause could pay him adequate tribute.

All the plays of Shakespeare are referred to as his canon of work. To quote Richard Monette, please come and celebrate his "last kick at the canon."

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This year, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. I was pleased to attend the recent reception hosted by CEO Robin Cardozo.

Thousands of organizations across Ontario, representing a cross-section of the diversity of our province, spend countless hours filling out complex applications in their quest for funding.

Hard-working and dedicated OTF staff work closely with the organizations, helping them with applications and making sure the process is transparent. The dedicated OTF grant review team scrutinize the applications and choose those that are successful.

The program awards assistance to groups representing the following: the environment, recreation, social programs, public safety, and the arts.

The money is well spent and appreciated and, above all, transparent and a wise use of public funds.

But we now have a new program, a program that is partisan, a disgraceful, Guité-style misuse of taxpayers' dollars, chaired by the election campaign chair of the

Ontario Liberal Party and part-time Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara. The program is called slush-fund-gate, and it's a cousin of the scandalous federal Liberal program called sponsorshipgate. The money is funnelled to the son of Guité and has to be rolled out before the end of the fiscal year—a true slush fund.

Ontario taxpayers should be reminded that on top of a string of broken promises, scandal now is the norm for this McGuinty government: one scandal after another and one broken promise after another.

The hard-working taxpayers of Ontario are paying for grants to Liberal-friendly organizations—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): It's a real honour for me to stand before this House today, during National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, to recognize the London Transplant Gift of Life Association for the wonderful work they do. This terrific group, made up of recipients, pre-transplant patients, donor families as well as community partners, strives to ensure that everyone who needs a transplant has the opportunity to get one.

The partnership between the London Health Sciences Centre's multi-organ transplant program, their director, Dr. William Wall, and the London Transplant Gift of Life Association has created a leading transplant program in Canada. Over 200 transplants are performed annually at LHSC, and the rate of organ donations in London continues to be one of the highest in Canada, due in large part to the efforts of this passionate group of volunteers.

I'm delighted to welcome to the House today Jane Tucker, founder and president of the London Transplant Gift of Life Association, as well as several of the association's directors, donor families and recipients. Carl and Lorraine Laing are here, Shirley and Ross Rowe are here, and I believe others are here as well. Welcome. I ask you to join me in thanking them for their tireless efforts to save and enhance more lives through the gift of organ and tissue donation in Ontario.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): When I first learned that the Minister of Citizenship was going to give a minister's statement on the grants scandal on Monday, I thought for a moment that he was going to do the right thing and apologize.

Not only did he not apologize, he broke his promise to release the specific criteria upon which the previous grants had been determined.

Clearly, there were no objective and defensible criteria, and as such, this was an egregious waste of taxpayers' money. How else could you characterize the expenditure of \$20 million of the taxpayers' money with

absolutely no due diligence, no financial background information requested of the grant recipients and no fundamental evaluation as to whether or not a need actually existed?

1340

This is surely a question which the Auditor General of Ontario must address, and he must do so and report his findings before October 10 to ensure that the McGuinty Liberal government is held to account for what has happened. It appears on the surface that with about five months to go before a provincial election, a desperate Minister of Finance, who also acts as chairman of the Ontario Liberal election campaign, allocated this money to the Minister of Citizenship. He then assigned him the task of shovelling the money out the door without any normal accountability provisions, in a blatant effort to generate support for the Liberal Party in that election.

The people of Waterloo-Wellington and Halton Hills will be outraged by this abuse of the public trust and the taxpayers' money. Instead of generating support for the Ontario Liberal Party, as the finance minister/campaign chair had planned, this scandal will only expedite the government's demise.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I read a letter from Wayne Samuelson, who is the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, representing thousands and thousands of cultural workers, to the Minister of Culture:

"Introduced as part of the 2007 budget measures, the proposed act provides no meaningful change to the material status of artists and cultural industry workers...." They "have been calling on the Ontario government to implement meaningful legislation that will improve artists' capacity to improve their wages and working conditions.

"We note with regret that your government has ignored the recommendations of its own advisory council. Despite a lengthy consultation undertaken by your Advisory Council for Arts and Culture, virtually all substantive recommendations contained in its report were left out of the proposed Status of Ontario's Artists Act...."

"Your government has designated the first full weekend in June to be an annual Celebrate the Artist weekend. We urge your government to celebrate the artist by making amendments to this legislation that will genuinely improve the status of all of Ontario's artists and cultural industry workers."

It's signed by Wayne Samuelson on behalf of literally thousands—tens of thousands—of cultural workers in this province.

KOREAN CANADIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I rise to talk about the great work of an important, hard-working organiza-

tion in Toronto. Two weeks ago, the McGuinty government announced a \$50,000 grant to support the Korean Canadian Women's Association Family and Social Services.

I want to highlight how indispensable the KCWA's work has been to many new Korean Canadians and the community at large. This not-for-profit organization was started in 1985 by a group of Korean women concerned with women's and family issues. The association offers a variety of information and referral services, from ESL classes to skills training and employment workshops. It provides social support for at-risk women, children and youth. Last year, it served more than 772 clients on a one-on-one basis.

KCWA has a proven track record of serving its community with integrity, care and professionalism. Its mandate to "empower Korean-Canadian families and other vulnerable members of the community at large to live free from violence, poverty and inequality" is an admirable objective.

I want to echo what Minister Colle said last week: "Supporting an organization like KCWA Family and Social Services helps us facilitate the economic and social richness that builds diversity in Ontario."

The grant will be used for important health and safety renovations and to fund the construction of a new ramp to improve the accessibility of the building. This government understands that diversity is important, and funding organizations like KCWA will have a direct impact on the quality of life—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

RED HAT SOCIETY

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I'm sure everyone will want to join with me in welcoming representatives from the Red Hat Society who are with us today. They're from the communities of Belleville and Carrying Place and Stirling and Picton—a wonderful part of Ontario.

For those of you who have not heard of the Red Hat Society—and there may be some, but they have literally hundreds of thousands of members across the world—they are an organization that has two guiding principles. One is, they have no rules; the second is, they do nothing.

For those of you who joined me in mid-sentence, I'm not talking about the opposition; I'm talking about the Red Hat Society. While I say that they do nothing, they consist of individuals who have contributed heavily to their community over the years and have decided to join together and do an activity that is fun—just straight fun. You know, we need more of that in this world. These are women who have been role models and continue to be role models in my community. They help to enrich and make the great society we have. I'm absolutely delighted to have them with us today.

Interestingly, when I say that their principle is that they do nothing, their first questions to me today were about the organ donation program and how much they support it and how much it is of interest to them. So even on the side, they continue to do good things.

Thank you for coming today. I'm sure you'll enjoy yourself. It's a pleasure to have you with us.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I want to talk about the great progress that the McGuinty government is making in the area of public health care and our commitment to the delivery of effective services to the people of Ontario.

The leader of the official opposition has repeatedly made it clear that his first priority is to take \$2.5 billion out of the health care budget. What does this mean? It means that all the progress this government has made to bring wait times down and to improve the quality of health care services would be reversed.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.
Member for Peterborough.

Mr. Leal: Do Ontarians want that? The answer is no.

The second thing the member opposite discussed was wanting to privatize our health care system. Do Ontarians want that? The answer is no.

The McGuinty government has been dedicated to repairing the health care system that we inherited from the previous government, which was subject to years of neglect and damage. With the recent budget, funding for our public health care system is up by \$8.5 billion, or 29%, since we took office.

While we're continuing to invest for the future of all Ontarians' health care needs, the members opposite would prefer to make health care a privilege and not an inherent right.

DEPUTY CLERK

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that, effective yesterday, Mr. Todd Decker will assume responsibilities as Deputy Clerk and executive director of legislative services.

VISITORS

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to acknowledge the presence in the House this afternoon of members of the Humber River Health Coalition, who are here to witness the presentation of their petition later this afternoon. I want to thank the following—Rennie Terbogt, Garry Green, Rosanna Vidale, Lorraine Schulz, Franca Guadanolo, Giuseppe Astrella and Walter Poremski—for their tremendous sense of community activism.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mrs. Bountrogianni moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 218, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I will, during ministers' statements.

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA DIVULGATION
DES TRAITEMENTS
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 219, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 219, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): This act is an extension of the sunshine list that was introduced by the Harris government in 1995 and embodied in the statute of 1996. This list publishes the the names of people in the public service, in Ontario Power Generation, in Hydro One and in many other institutions of government earning over \$100,000 a year.

Unfortunately, this provision doesn't extend to municipal hydro or public utility corporations. My bill would extend it to those particular corporations. My feeling—and, I think, the feeling of all people, particularly the citizens of Ottawa—is that they should know how much the people who are working for their taxpayers' dollars are earning if, in fact, they earn over \$100,000.

I urge all members of this Legislature to support my bill and the wishes of Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien, who has called for this change.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 25, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Bryant, Michael
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Chan, Michael
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline

Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Fonseca, Peter
Hoy, Pat
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David

Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim

Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Murdoch, Bill
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 24.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome a number of students in master studies from the School of Restoration Arts at Willowbank in Queenston, Niagara-on-the-Lake, who are touring the Legislative Assembly to learn about Queen's Park restorative practices on our fine historic

buildings. I also want to indicate that they're joined by the acting president, Carol Beckman Nixon, and its school director, Shelley Huson. I'd like all members to welcome the students and the class from Queenston.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us, in the Speaker's gallery, members of the Consular Spouses Association of Toronto and their president, Putti Mehta of India. Welcome.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PEDIATRIC FORENSIC PATHOLOGY INQUIRY

ENQUÊTE SUR LE SYSTÈME DE MÉDECINE LÉGALE PÉDIATRIQUE

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I rise in the House today to announce details of a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act into the oversight of Ontario's pediatric forensic pathology system in the wake of the chief coroner's review involving Dr. Charles Smith.

I'm pleased to inform the House that the Ontario government has appointed the Honourable Stephen Goudge of the Court of Appeal for Ontario as commissioner of the public inquiry. The commissioner's job is to get to the bottom of what happened and to make recommendations to prevent it from ever happening again.

Justice Goudge will spend the next year reviewing and assessing the systemic policies, procedures, practices, accountability and oversight mechanisms, quality control measures and institutional arrangements related to the practice of pediatric forensic pathology and its future use in investigations and criminal proceedings. Under the Public Inquiries Act, this commission of inquiry will have the power to issue a summons for testimony and for documents. Justice Goudge will deliver a report with recommendations within a year from today, the goal of which is to enhance public confidence in pediatric forensic pathology.

We need to improve the system and prevent this from recurring. These pediatric pathology reports may be only one element of the justice system, but one significant mistake in one report is unacceptable.

La confiance du public a été ébranlée. Nous devons savoir exactement ce qui s'est passé. Nous devons empêcher que cela ne se reproduise à l'avenir.

There can be nothing more tragic than the death of a child. Many families have already been through so much more than many of us could imagine. So, too, are miscarriages of justice tragedies for our justice system and for the individuals affected.

If there has been any miscarriage of justice amongst the 13 convictions in which the chief coroner's review has identified problems with Dr. Smith's findings, as

chief law officer of the crown I will and crown attorneys will do everything in our power to set it right. More on the work that we are doing in the Ministry of the Attorney General in a moment.

I believe Justice Goudge is the right person to lead this inquiry. He is a respected jurist who was appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal in 1996. Prior to that, he had a long and distinguished career as one of Canada's premier litigators, based in Toronto. He appeared before the courts at all levels in Ontario, before the Supreme Court of Canada and before many administrative tribunals. He was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1982. He was active in the Ontario Bar Association and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

Ian Scott, our late, great Attorney General, was a partner of the Honourable Stephen Goudge's, and he referred to Justice Goudge in his autobiography as having a razor-like mind, an ability to get to the truth and to manage issues in an office effectively, and I know he will do that in this public inquiry.

Justice Goudge will be supported by an expert panel of scientists and medical professionals. This panel will be chaired by Senator Larry Campbell. Mr. Campbell is a former chief coroner of British Columbia, a former mayor of Vancouver. He spent 12 years in the RCMP and helped establish Vancouver's first district coroner's office. He has the experience and the expertise to offer Justice Goudge assistance, knowledge and information to help fulfill his mandate.

As the inquiry is set up and begins its work, my ministry's criminal law division is already taking swift action to respond to the coroner's review. Crown attorneys have been assigned to individual cases—the 13 convictions that I referred to. They have shared and they will continue to quickly share information as we receive it from the chief coroner's office, and provide it to defence.

We are ready, willing and able to respond to any next steps by defence. Under the Criminal Code, it is only the defence that can take the next legal step in this important process. Depending on the circumstance and the status of the case, defence can pursue applications for bail, and that has been done. We have co-operated in one bail application already and one to come before the courts.

Defence can pursue avenues of appeal, and that has already happened and there are appeals before the courts. Or, if the appeals have been exhausted, the defence can apply to the federal justice minister under section 696 of the code for a review of the conviction, and in one case that has happened already. These processes are under way in some cases and they must continue. In all cases, the crowns will be fully co-operating with the defence. We will do all we can to expedite these matters.

Already, less than a week after the chief coroner released his report, we have consented to bail in one case, will be consenting to bail in a second matter that's before the courts, have indicated consent in an appeal application in a third case, as set out in a letter by the chief prosecutor, and, within a week of the chief coroner's report, have called a full public inquiry, named the com-

missioner and established the terms of reference. We are moving ahead as quickly and deliberately as possible.

Within the Ministry of the Attorney General, work is already under way to ensure that crown policies and practices are responsive to the coroner's review and that crowns are provided with as much guidance as possible in assessing expert evidence. That work is done by the ministry's criminal convictions review committee. It's a committee of crown attorneys that has recently welcomed the Honourable Patrick LeSage, former Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Ontario. His Honour and the committee will be providing advice to crowns on trends emerging from these cases, from the chief coroner's reports and other cases. The ministry's criminal law division is also working closely with the chief coroner's office to prioritize for review Dr. Smith's cases from 1981 to 1991.

On compensation: As with the Walkerton inquiry, as with the Arar inquiry and as with the Moran inquiry, issues of compensation will be addressed separately from the public inquiry. That's what happened with those inquiries and that's what will happen in this instance as well.

Ontario's justice system is the envy of much of the world. It's the cornerstone of a safe, just and civil society. We must be certain that it is beyond reproach. That is why we are calling a full public inquiry; that is why we are calling for that report to be delivered within a year's time. It is the best way to restore and enhance public confidence in pediatric forensic pathology in this province and in our justice system.

I thank Justice Goudge and former chief coroner Campbell for taking on this important task, pledge co-operation on behalf of the Ontario government and call on all members to support Justice Goudge in his inquiry.

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ELECTORAL REFORM RÉFORME ÉLECTORALE

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'm sure that everyone in this House, myself included, treasures our democratic freedoms and the right to vote. But sometimes people fail to exercise their right to vote because our election laws have not kept pace with the realities of people's lives.

The McGuinty government's democratic renewal initiatives are designed to ensure that our electoral processes keep pace with the needs of Ontarians. The legislation I am introducing today would do just that. It would encourage more people to vote and it would make it easier for Ontarians to get to the polls.

The amendments to the Election Act would modernize elections by making it easier than ever for Ontarians to vote. This legislation, if passed, would extend polling hours by one hour at the end of polling day. Polls would now close at 9 p.m. Due to the time difference, polls in

northwestern Ontario would close at 8 p.m., but the polls would close at the same moment in time. The number of advance polling days would increase from six to 13 at returning offices and to 10 days at other locations.

This legislation would also require Elections Ontario to undertake new targeted registration to update the permanent register of electors, thereby improving the voters' list. The chief electoral officer would now also be allowed to pilot new voting technologies in future by-elections.

If this legislation is passed, party names would appear on ballots in the next election. Candidates' names on ballots would be followed by their political affiliation where the candidate has been endorsed by the party. Independent candidates' names would be identified as independents if requested by the candidate.

Cette loi inciterait davantage de personnes à aller voter. Elle conférerait au directeur général des élections le pouvoir de communiquer avec la population et de lui faire mieux connaître le processus électoral. Le directeur général des élections aurait l'obligation de fournir aux conseils scolaires des trousseaux de renseignements pour les jeunes qui votent pour la première fois. Ces trousseaux permettraient aux élèves et à leurs parents de mieux comprendre notre système électoral.

This proposed legislation would also protect election integrity by requiring all voters to provide proof of identity and, in some cases, proof of residence. This would enhance the integrity of the electoral process. The chief electoral officer has the authority to determine the acceptable types of identification.

La période d'interdiction de publicité initiale a été établie pour s'assurer qu'un gouvernement ne jouisse pas d'un avantage indu pour préparer une élection par rapport aux autres partis. En raison de la décision de prévoir les élections à date fixe, ce motif n'est plus de rigueur et nous proposons l'élimination de la période d'interdiction qui s'appliquait à toutes les élections normalement prévues. Toutefois, cette période continuerait de s'appliquer aux élections partielles ou non prévues.

This legislation would do more than just modernize Ontario's election processes. As this Legislature knows, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform has been working diligently since last September to assess the current electoral system and other systems in order to recommend whether Ontario should keep its current system or adopt a new one. Never before in Ontario's history has a government delegated so much power to the people of this province to make a decision about an issue of fundamental importance.

We did so because we believe that ordinary people working together can accomplish extraordinary things. One Ontarian from every riding in the province was given the time and the resources to learn about, talk about and think about the issue of how we in this chamber should be elected. We await their final report on May 15 for the details of their proposed model.

But as we all aware, the citizens' assembly voted on April 15 in favour of recommending a different elec-

toral system to the people of Ontario. We are therefore also introducing an amendment to the Election Act that would require the chief electoral officer to conduct a neutral public education campaign to provide electors across Ontario with the following information: the date of the referendum, the content of the choices in the referendum, the referendum process, and the question electors will be asked to vote on.

It is crucial that this information be neutral and non-partisan to allow Ontarians to make up their own minds on this important issue. That's why we're proposing to direct the chief electoral officer, an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, to undertake this campaign. The chief electoral officer would provide to the voters of Ontario clear, impartial information about the current electoral system and the recommended alternative electoral system. This neutral and independent public education campaign would give Ontarians the tools they need to make an informed decision when going to the polls this fall. During the election and referendum debate, we want to ensure that all election advertising activities are transparent. That is why this legislation proposes transparency and reporting rules for third party advertising.

This legislation would enhance participation, integrity and security in a non-disruptive way. We believe that citizens should be able to exercise their democratic right to vote. We believe that it shouldn't be a chore to get on the voters' list. We believe that busy people should be able to more easily vote in advance polls or at the end of a hard working day. We believe that people should have to show identification in order to improve the integrity of the electoral process.

We believe that Ontarians should be provided with a neutral, non-partisan public education campaign to prepare them to participate in the electoral reform referendum.

Les citoyens sont les maîtres des élections; pas le gouvernement. En tant que gouvernement, il nous incombe de veiller à ce que le processus électoral se conforme aux réalités du monde actuel et de permettre à la population de l'Ontario de participer pleinement et de manière informée au débat sur la réforme électorale.

That's what this legislation would do. It would also set the groundwork for more changes once we know the outcome of the electoral reform referendum.

As minister responsible for democratic renewal, I am proud to stand in support of this bill. It is our responsibility as a government to ensure that people can exercise their right to vote. I urge all members of this House to join me in supporting this bill.

CLIMATE CHANGE

CHANGEMENT DE CLIMAT

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): This is Earth Week in Ontario. It's time to celebrate the wonderful gift that we have been given. It's also time to take action.

All over the world, people are recognizing an important truth: We share a moral responsibility to care for this planet. People everywhere are coming forward with simple, effective ideas to reduce our environmental footprint to help fight climate change. But, as all the members here know, an idea is just an idea until it becomes an action. We need to back up good thinking with good actions.

One person who is proving that actions speak louder than words is Sir Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin group of companies. Sir Richard Branson is a global leader on many levels. Today, though, first and foremost, he is a champion of climate change awareness.

This morning, I had the honour of joining him, along with Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence, and other founding partners of an unprecedented national coalition to launch Flick Off, a campaign like no other. Flick Off is a global warming activism campaign, a cross-country initiative designed to educate and engage Canadians about climate change and motivate them to take action. What is so encouraging is to see progressive business leaders like Sir Richard and other members of our coalition step up, speak out and take action.

I'm proud that our government is part of this national coalition that empowers Ontarians to take action. We aim to empower Ontarians across this great province to conserve energy, to tell their friends and families to conserve energy, to exchange old habits for new ones—to flick off.

In launching this campaign today, I also challenge my provincial counterparts across Canada to join us. The need to act is now. The planet cannot wait.

Je profite du lancement de cette campagne aujourd'hui pour lancer un défi à mes homologues provinciaux : joignez-vous à nous. C'est aujourd'hui qu'il faut agir. La planète n'attendra pas.

This government is serious about our environmental stewardship. We recognize that fighting climate change is going to take a comprehensive approach that involves many different actions on a variety of fronts. I have heard those voices that have gone from denying the very existence of climate change to fear-mongering with dire predictions about the cost of cutting our greenhouse gas emissions. But our government has seen the costs of inaction, and we see the reason for hope. We hear the voices of Ontarians who want to see progress. Ontarians can and will do their part to fight climate change.

We've seen it in the past. This is where grassroots actions grew into powerful and effective environmental initiatives. We're the home of the highly successful blue box program, which has become an international symbol of recycling; we removed lead from gasoline and banned DDT; we phased out CFCs, which were destroying the ozone layer; and we cut emissions to save our lakes and forests from acid rain.

Climate change will take the same kind of dedication and innovation. This battle is about what we do and what we don't do; what we buy and what we don't buy; how we choose to live and where we choose to live. It's about choice, not sacrifice.

1420

We only stand to benefit from our immediate actions. Every government on earth is recognizing that it needs to take serious action to address the threat of global warming. In Ontario, we are not waiting. Together we have the knowledge, the ability and the will to do our part to halt the effects of climate change. There are a lot of things each and every one of us can do to help make a difference, and that's what's really going to matter.

Our government is working hard on many fronts in the efforts to reduce climate change and greenhouse gases. Our recent Bill 198, the proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, is now in second reading before this House. It recognizes we need to take strong, decisive action to protect our Great Lakes basin, today and for years to come.

I just recently joined my cabinet colleague Minister Duncan in announcing our government's plan to ban inefficient light bulbs by 2012, a step forward that is the equivalent of taking 250,000 cars off the road.

Our \$2-million budget will see 1.8 million trees planted in the greenbelt in partnership with Trees Ontario.

Climate change is the most critical issue of our time. It's going to affect everyone, no matter where you live, rich or poor. At the same time, climate change is bringing environmental awareness to the forefront. We're seeing great ideas. We're seeing inspiring commitments from the grassroots—people like Sir Richard Branson, who is offering a stunning \$25 million to advance the fight against climate change. It is this kind of activism, this dedication, the spirit of creativity today, tomorrow and for generations to come—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Responses?

PEDIATRIC FORENSIC PATHOLOGY INQUIRY

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm happy to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus in response to the Attorney General's announcement of some details of the public inquiry into the oversight of Ontario's pediatric forensic pathology system, an announcement that I would suggest is well overdue.

The fact of the matter is that in June 2005, aspersions were cast publicly on the credibility of Dr. Charles Smith over at least four autopsies he had conducted, covered in approximately five news stories, including one on the front page of the *Toronto Star*.

Among the allegations against Dr. Smith was the concern that he had mishandled evidence, in one case by keeping pertinent evidence in a desk drawer that was never submitted and was later seized by police, and in another by losing tissue samples that were sealed in an envelope and later discovered on his desk only as a result of a thorough search of his office.

In April 2005, the Ontario Court of Appeal, when ruling on a stay of charges against a Toronto couple accused of murdering their three-month old baby, said,

"It is inescapable that the trial of this matter was delayed for the better part of two years because of the failings of the chief crown witness, Dr. Charles Smith."

I find these allegations and the delay in responding extremely troubling, and apparently I'm not the only one. It was reported in today's *Kingston Whig-Standard* that at least one of the Attorney General's colleagues brought this matter to his attention some time ago. When asked why the Attorney General has waited until now to act, the Minister of Municipal Affairs answered, "Why not earlier? I don't know."

Perhaps I can help Mr. Gerretsen answer this question, as I would suggest it is no coincidence that the Attorney General has come forward and announced this inquiry only after details were made public of a woman's plea for an appeal on her charge of murdering her child whose case was handled by Dr. Smith.

This is just another example of a McGuinty minister taking action only after having been caught asleep at the switch.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I want to respond to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and democratic renewal with regard to the bill on election reform laws.

This particular bill has some attractive expansions of what voters can do and will do and how voters will come to the polls in an educated manner. However, there are some troubling sections with regard to this bill, and of course, we will be looking at those in greater detail as we go forward, but one of them is this—and I want to congratulate Mr. Patten, the member for Ottawa Centre, with regard to putting party affiliation on the ballot; it's a fight that he has undertaken for a long period of time.

Notwithstanding that, that, coupled with Bill 162, which is buried as schedule 11 of the budget bill, does leave one to think that great mischief could occur in the next provincial election, and it will be very easy to undertake that mischief given that two people could basically form a party now. With the ability to put a name on the ballot, confusion can result. Sometimes that confusion may be intended. With regard to what happens in the future, as well, there is latitude given to the Chief Election Officer without the approval of the political parties, which he now has to get under our present legislation before he ventures out into new experiments with regard to the voting process. I believe that political parties here in the Legislature should be part of the consultation and should in fact have the power to direct the election commissioner as to what experiments he may or may not undertake.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today in response to the Minister of the Environment's statement and to congratulate private industry

for taking up the climate change challenge and putting their money where their mouth is. I want to also congratulate the Minister of the Environment for finding someone else's successful parade to try and jump in front of, and pretend to take the lead.

Four years have passed since Dalton McGuinty was elected—no climate change plans; no targets; no vision. The people of Ontario are still waiting. This McGuinty government has shown no leadership. They have a sorry record on the environment: four years of broken promises and what the Environment Commissioner calls Neglecting Our Obligations. After so many broken promises, what we know is that Dalton McGuinty's only action on the environment is to make a play on words and have many photo ops. It's just more rhetoric from a leaderless Liberal Party.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): As my colleague just had to say this morning, there was a press conference introducing a new campaign called Flick Off: a novel campaign, an interesting campaign about climate change awareness.

But yesterday the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario reported that in Ontario environmental laws are not properly enforced, and that when you actually look at environmental requirements in this province, 90% to 100% of firms that are supposed to be in compliance with environmental regulations are not.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): That's 90% to 100%?

Mr. Tabuns: That's 90% to 100%. That, I have to say, speaks volumes to the reality of the environmental commitment on the part of the McGuinty government.

Today—this morning; I was there—the minister spoke of her support for Kyoto, although she has opposed the NDP's climate change act, which would bring Ontario into the Kyoto framework, and has proposed nothing, and all that we have heard is talking about 2020. That's what I call “someone who has a sense of urgency about the issue.”

Yesterday, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario reported that 40% of all facilities in the province are operating without the necessary environmental approvals. My goodness. I have to say that there is a burning sense of need on the part of the minister to really make sure environmental laws are enforced—urgent, urgent.

So the minister today talks about climate change. Yesterday, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario made it very clear that actually ensuring that the laws we have on the books are enforced is not on her books, not on her radar, not on her horizon. This government will pass laws that it will not enforce. This government will speak grandly.

Last fall, the Environmental Commissioner's report, *Neglecting Our Obligations*—good title—said, “Funding essential ministries”—like the environment—“at such low levels that they are bound to fail is a fundamental neglect of our obligations to the natural environment, to the people of Ontario and to the generations yet to be born.”

Tomorrow—the day after tomorrow—when this government finally opens the package to show us what they are going to say they will promise to do about the environment sometime, keep in mind that they aren't even enforcing the laws they have on the books today.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): In response to the minister of democratic renewal: The lofty promises of three and a half years ago have all come to naught. If you look at the Liberal promises three and a half years ago, on pages 11 and 12 of your great work *Government That Works for You*, you promised to set up citizens' juries. You promised that, in your own words: “Limits on raising and spending money should not be limited to the brief few weeks of an election campaign. In modern politics, much of the ‘campaign’ spending occurs before the election is even called.” And what have you done on this? Absolutely nothing.

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Then you go on, and you went on in those lofty goals of three and a half years ago to talk about the Liberal promise: “Exercising your right to vote should be as easy as possible. The permanent voters' list, used for the first time in the last provincial election, created serious problems that led to poor turnouts in low-income and high-density areas, as well as among young Ontarians. We will counter these effects with supplementary, targeted voter enumeration to ensure that these groups are not overlooked.” And what have you done? Absolutely nothing. In fact, you have made it nearly impossible for people who live in tenanted buildings to vote. We know exactly what happened in York South–Weston. We know that in those buildings that had 100 or more people in the building, where there was a registered place to vote somewhere in the building, the turnout was 39%. We know that when there was not a place within the building for them to vote, the turnout was 16%. What you are doing by amending section 13 is making it literally impossible for tenants to vote. You are making it so impossible—they will find it very difficult. We know why you're doing that. We know you're doing that because the tenants are damn angry with you because of your lack of tenant legislation policy. You have allowed them to live in horrible places, and when they want to come out to vote for you, you will make it impossible for them to do it. You should be ashamed of that.

You have come out with some other stuff, too. It's really hard to believe that you think this is a democratic reform when you are going to deny people, when you are going to make it more difficult for them to vote rather than easier. You should be ashamed of what is in this bill. You should have done the right thing; you should have lived up to your promises of three and a half years ago.

VISITORS

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would

like to acknowledge 10 exceptional guests we have in our gallery today. These are incredible people who are Holocaust survivors and who were honoured today by the Premier, Minister Kwinter, MPPs Frank Klees and Ted Chudleigh, and the leader of the opposition at a ceremony by the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem to honour the victims of the Holocaust so we will never forget.

They are with us. These 10 unsung heroes are Jack Buchman, Sidia Cowen, Sala Goldhar, Joseph Gottdenker, Faigie Libman, Harold Rotman, Sam Simchovitch, Sigmund Soudack, Goldi Steiner and Henry Leonard Waks. On behalf of all members of the House and the people of Ontario, I'd like to pause to acknowledge these extraordinary survivors, extraordinary Ontarians.

Applause.

ARCHIE CAMPBELL

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the passing of former justice Archie Campbell.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I rise today to mark the life and career of Justice Archie Campbell.

Tout au long de son éminente carrière, le juge Campbell a servi le public de l'Ontario de bien des façons.

Over the course of his distinguished career, Judge Campbell served the public of Ontario in many ways, but describing him simply as a lawyer, teacher and judge does not begin to describe the breadth of Justice Campbell's contribution to this province.

His first exposure to the law came during high school when he worked summers under the tutelage of one Roy McMurtry at Benson, McMurtry, Chief Justice McMurtry's former firm. The Chief Justice took the young student under his wing, and the two remained friends for more than 50 years.

Following law school, he returned to article at Benson, McMurtry and Percival under Arthur Martin, one of our greatest criminal lawyers—maybe our greatest—and later a member of the Ontario Court of Appeal.

With mentors like McMurtry and Martin, Justice Campbell was destined for greatness, and greatness did he achieve.

After passing the bar, Justice Campbell immediately joined the Ministry of the Attorney General, specializing in criminal appeals and prosecutions. His great legal mind quickly propelled him through the ranks as he rose to become Deputy Attorney General under our two greatest Attorneys General, McMurtry and Scott.

Along the way, he took a year off to work as director of the Parkdale Community Legal Services clinic and to teach at Osgoode Hall Law School. He showed that pub-

lic service was where you found it, and Justice Campbell found it in many places.

As deputy to Attorneys General McMurtry and Scott, Justice Campbell was inspiring and innovative and always brought an infectious spirit of fun to the workplace. He was a consensus builder who, no matter how complex an issue, was always able to see the big picture.

News of his passing left many at the McMurtry-Scott Building and many of the thousands of people who work in the Ministry of the Attorney General across this province, past and present, sad but reflective on his immense contribution to our province and its legal system. He's fondly remembered for his devotion, sharp intellect and compassion in service to citizens of Ontario.

Justice Campbell was appointed to the then Supreme Court of Ontario, High Court division, in 1986. At the time, Premier David Peterson—he didn't appoint him; the federal government appointed him—said that Justice Campbell's appointment "will be universally heralded as a brilliant one." He was right.

Then-Attorney General Ian Scott called him "a truly great public servant, of whom this province, whoever was entrusted with the government of the day, may be proud."

As his career moved to the bench, Justice Campbell, of course, proved both Peterson and Scott quite right. In a short time, he was admired as a highly respected jurist who embodied the best characteristics of the bench: a deep knowledge and respect of the law and the wisdom to apply it fairly.

Counsel appearing before him appreciated not only his sense of fairness and justice but also his kindness and his sense of humour. That was my personal experience as well.

Quite rightly, Chief Justice McMurtry remembered Archie Campbell last week as "one of the giants of the legal world" and "one of the most able judges in the country."

His legal expertise and wisdom was called upon in 1995 when he was asked to head a review of the police investigation into the murders of Ontario teenagers Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy. His recommendations resulted in numerous changes to major case management techniques and policies in police headquarters across the country. Those changes remain today.

In 2003, Justice Campbell was called on to investigate the response to the SARS outbreak. Once again, his two reports pulled no punches and delivered well-thought-out proposals. Overall, his thorough work and thoughtful recommendations have made this province a better and safer place, but a more compassionate one as well.

He became a champion for Ontario's front-line nursing staff by reminding the public of their heroic efforts to save lives during the SARS crisis. And, of course, he was right.

Benjamin Disraeli once remarked that "justice is truth in action." Archie Campbell was the embodiment of this sentiment. By his life and deeds, Archie Campbell was

justice in action, he was truth in action, and all of us are richer by his actions on our behalf.

On behalf of the Premier and the government of Ontario, I offer my most sincere condolences to friends and family of Justice Campbell, and the thanks of a grateful province.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I'd like to associate our party with the comments of the Attorney General in regard to the unbelievable career of Justice Campbell, a man whom I got to know as "Archie" back in 1978, when I first served as the parliamentary assistant to then-Attorney General Roy McMurtry.

I talked with Chief Justice McMurtry this morning and we went over some of his remembrances of Archie, and I talked to Judge Thomson as well about some of his memories with regard to Mr. Campbell.

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The first time I ever saw Archie Campbell was in a committee; we were then in a minority Parliament in 1978. We were in the thrust between 1975 and 1985, 10 years of tremendous law reform in this province. Something like 59 different pieces of legislation were passed over that period of time, and at the head of it was Archie Campbell. He was a tremendous person, a tremendous scholar and had tremendous wisdom, but he had this common touch. He had a common touch. I'll never forget when Archie walked into this particular committee room—I was told that he was coming over. I had never met him; I had just been appointed parliamentary assistant.

Right in the middle of the hearings on the new Family Law Reform Act, the first Family Law Reform Act that this province had ever passed, in walks this fellow with Kodiak boots half open, a pair of red suspenders and sort of an open-collar shirt and a sport coat on. That was Archie Campbell. Archie Campbell didn't look the part, but of all the Deputy Attorneys General, he was probably the most genuine this province has ever seen, because he cared so much about the justice system. He was a fierce advocate of the independence of the justice system, and he carried that through to his days on the bench. He was unbelievably bright. One of the greatest parts about Archie Campbell was that, whether you sat on the government side or the opposition side of the floor, he respected members of this Legislature to an unbelievable extent.

He would listen, and then he would make his position. He was always ready, quite frankly, to listen to good argument one way or the other. But I'll tell you this too: If he held a particular view, particularly with regard to the independence of the justice system, the independence of the judiciary of our province, it was very hard to knock him off that kind of belief.

Notwithstanding his great work with regard to the police activity around the Bernardo conviction and trial, he remained and was always considered a friend by the police. He was able to bring forward great, great recommendations with regard to how they could improve their performance into the future. The police have taken his

recommendations and embraced them, and we have better police services in our province because of Justice Archie Campbell.

Of course, he did wonderful work on the SARS report too, with regard to a very, very difficult situation that our province found itself in.

Archie Campbell was also just a great guy to go out to lunch or dinner with. To be around Archie Campbell was to know that you were going to go out and have a good time. Archie was humorous and he loved life. He had a great appetite for life. He loved fishing. He loved to talk about going up north and going camping. He was very much a historian, particularly with regard to the US Civil War, and loved to talk about issues like that. He loved poetry and could quote many of our famous poets off the top of his head and do it with great charm, entertaining everybody around him.

In the last eight months, Archie had some very significant health problems, and Chief Justice McMurtry said to me that he couldn't believe the strength and determination of Mr. Campbell. I guess it was best summed up by Judge Thompson, whom I was talking to today. He said, "Archie Campbell worked hard and played hard." When he said he "worked hard," this gentleman would put in, for our justice system over his life—it wouldn't be anything for him to think about 14- or 16-hour days in terms of doing what had to be done, whatever endeavour he was involved in.

Archie Campbell, after eight months of sickness—and some of it was very, very difficult sickness. Notwithstanding that, only three or four weeks ago, he was in a courtroom. He went into the courtroom with his wheelchair and with an oxygen bottle and apparatus so that he could function, because he had a very serious chronic lung disease that was attacking him, as well as cancer. He was so happy to be back in court three or four weeks ago, in spite of the circumstances, because he just loved the justice system and he loved working with the law and he loved working with all of the people involved in the justice system.

We have lost a lawyer of all lawyers, and we have lost a judge of all judges.

Our condolences go out to his wife, Julie Poole, his son, James, his daughter, Sarah, who's also a lawyer, his stepchildren, his grandchildren and all.

We've lost a truly great Ontarian, and I have lost a great friend.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): We acknowledge today that Ontario has lost a great citizen, a leading jurist, an inspiring teacher, a thoughtful scholar, an able administrator, a leader in the public service and truly a great citizen.

At the same time, however, we have to celebrate a life that was full, that was happy, and that was lived in the spirit of service to the community.

Archie Campbell did many things. He pursued a career in government as a public prosecutor and as an appeal counsel. He was an able administrator, and became the deputy minister of two government ministries.

He was a very successful and leading jurist. He inspired anyone who sat with him on the bench, and he was an innovator on the bench. People respected his work so much that he was named to not one public inquiry but two public inquiries: the handling of the Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka case, which he handled with incredible expertise; and, most recently, he led the inquiry into the government's handling of the SARS outbreak.

Over the course of his busy career, he even found time to work as an educator, teaching literacy and English as a second language in logging camps, hydro camps and railway camps across northern Ontario. He taught law at Osgoode Hall, and he spent a year establishing a legal aid clinic to help people who didn't have the financial means to be able to afford access to justice.

Archie Campbell was a tireless and dedicated individual, committing to his work in the SARS inquiry and finishing his work in the SARS inquiry even as his own health worsened, completing the report in January, three months before his untimely death. That dedication was vintage Archie Campbell. He never left work unfinished, and he was always willing to commit time and energy to do the work to make Ontario a better place.

The first time I met Archie Campbell was under some rather intimidating circumstances. It was right after the Askov decision, which threatened to literally remove tens of thousands of criminal charges from our criminal courts in Ontario. We had to very quickly find a way to get the judges—federally appointed judges, provincially appointed judges—to consider some very quick changes in how we conducted our courts. Archie Campbell was the regional senior judge for the Toronto region, so I had to meet with him. I remember walking into the meeting and saying to myself, "This is going to be a very tough meeting." I no more than got in the door when he looked at me and said, "You're from Fort Frances." I was very puzzled that he would know what small town I came from. He said, "When I was a university student, I worked three summers as a Canada Customs officer in Fort Frances." He then proceeded to ask me if I had ever visited the Shamrock Bar in International Falls, Minnesota. It's a rather disreputable place. I admitted that I had. He said, "I have visited it many times." He then asked me if I knew of the Busy Bee, an even more disreputable bar in International Falls, Minnesota. I quietly said that I had. He said, "I have been there many times."

He then proceeded to regale me with stories of being a customs officer and having American tourists pull up at the border when it was 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the middle of July and ask him, as the customs officer, "Where's the snow?" He also told me of one particular case where a car full of tourists pulled up and he said to them, "Do you have any handguns in the car? You know that handguns are illegal in Canada." There was a bit of silence, and then one of the fellows said, "Yes, there's a handgun in the glove compartment." He said, "Well, you have to hand it over. Are there any other handguns in the car?" Someone else said, "Yes, there's one in the trunk." "You'll have to hand that over."

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Archie had an amazing sense of humour. He was someone who never lost the common touch, who could talk with anyone about almost any subject and make people feel perfectly comfortable in that conversation. To put it bluntly, he was someone who could walk with philosopher kings but never, ever lost the common touch.

We have lost truly a great Ontarian, and we all need to acknowledge that. But we also need to recognize that, like so many great Ontarians, what Archie Campbell accomplished is going to live on for some time. We extend our condolences to his family and friends, but we say to his family and friends, this is truly a life well-lived.

The Speaker: On behalf of the Legislature, I will see that the Hansard of the Attorney General, the member for Lanark—Carleton and the leader of the third party is transmitted to the family.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it concerns the political slush fund. What we're looking for from you are some answers about the process you followed with this money that you blew out the door at the end of the fiscal year. You said on April 18 that you had written criteria that were followed. When asked about it, you said you actually had those. You said, "I've got those." You promised to make those criteria public, as did your press spokesperson, but since then we've seen nothing. You've refused to bring that documentation forward.

I wonder if you'd agree to make a copy of that document available to us, the written criteria that you used in determining which of the groups got money and which did not, in allocating this year-end slush fund money. Will you make it available?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The mandate of my ministry and the principles that we're based on is to invest in our diverse communities, our newcomer communities, to ensure that volunteerism is enhanced, to ensure that communities are built not only with roads and bridges but with community centres and community participation. We invest in that kind of enhancement and growth.

Mr. Tory: We can read about the mandate of the ministry on the website, although what we're after here is what is not on the website, contrary to the impression created by the Premier in his comments in the last couple of days. All we're trying to get is something that you said existed. You said it yourself on April 18. Your press spokesperson said it would be made available, and we're asking for the written criteria that were applied. We're

not asking about the mandate of your ministry; we're asking for the written criteria that were applied to these distributions of hundreds of thousands of dollars of the taxpayers' money. It's a very reasonable thing to think exists. You said it did, and now we're asking for a copy. We simply want to see it.

If you won't produce it here, will you at least agree that the Liberal members of the public accounts committee, when it meets tomorrow, will vote in favour of asking the auditor to collect this material from you so that we can have an open look at this? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: When my ministry makes investments, the investments are guided to meet the needs that have not been met for decades by previous governments. Those are needs in ensuring there's inclusivity. They're a celebration and investment in our heritage, whether it be the Underground Railroad, whether it be victims of the Irish famine who made Ontario their home, or whether it be newcomer communities. Those are the principles our investments are based on.

Mr. Tory: I think the minister is deliberately missing the point, which is that there were—you said the other day in the House that there were hundreds of groups that had approached you looking for money. You picked 31 and gave them the different amounts of money we've discussed here. We're simply looking for the basis upon which you made the choice of the few that got the money out of the hundreds that approached you.

When we asked about the auditor the other day, you said to us, "The office of the auditor has within his or her mandate that independent authority to do what they want." That's what you said here on Monday. I got a letter back from the auditor today in which he says, "Our act specifies that I may only undertake special assignments requested by the assembly, the standing committee on public accounts, or a minister of the crown."

Tomorrow morning, there will be a motion put to the public accounts committee asking that they look into this. Will you put your money where your mouth is, if you're not trying to hide anything, and simply indicate that the Liberal members will support, or that you yourself will request that the auditor look into this so we'll all know—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I think what is missing here is the fact that for years, thousands and thousands of newcomers especially have never been listened to. They continually ask me for more investments in language—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I won't warn the member for Nepean—Carleton again.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: They continually point out to me the need to make more investments in newcomer programs for second-language training. They continue to say that the plight of foreign-trained professionals needs to be invested in. They continue to say that too many newcomers who come to Ontario live below the poverty line. These are the constant reminders that I get as I go across

cities like London, Hamilton, Toronto or Sudbury. It's the same thing.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration again. We'll try to go at this a different way.

The minister is refusing—because I asked him three times to put out the written criteria that he says exists. Today he's quoted in the Toronto Star as saying that the track records of organizations are what he relies on to make sure he's spending the money wisely, and yet we've seen that one of the groups has been registered early on as an animal welfare organization and another one is embroiled in a court case regarding its financial management. He said that he helps groups, big and small, some of which are just starting out.

If you won't produce the criteria, will you tell us specifically—maybe you could go through the list and tell us what you did to check on the backgrounds of these groups that you gave the money to, the 31 you picked out of the hundreds that came to see you needing money for these purposes that you describe. What did you do to check their backgrounds? Will you tell us what you did?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said earlier—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I will not warn the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke again.
Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: When you go throughout communities across Ontario, there are incredible numbers of hard-working volunteer organizations, settlement organizations, that are trying to ensure that newcomers are integrated with proper language skills and language training skills. We constantly get notification that we need to do more. Whether it's the little community group AWIC—do you know what their credentials are? I've seen their centre up in the Peanut area of Don Mills, where they're in a small basement room about the size of these two chairs and another side room with five volunteer staff. Those are the criteria I base it on, and their hard work.

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Mr. Tory: With the greatest of respect, many of us have been to many of these places. But if you're expecting us to accept the fact that that is an adequate way to safeguard the allocation of taxpayers' money, I think you're sadly mistaken as to the standard that is expected of you by the taxpayers. I think they have reason to expect that you would have asked for some kind of application form; that you would have done some kind of background check; that you might have had somebody at arm's length from yourself, as an elected politician, participate in the assessment of these groups; and that you might have had some kind of audit as to what they did with the money once they received it. You've chosen to do absolutely none of that, and it falls well short of what the taxpayers expect.

My question is, will you confirm that the reason you didn't ask for a value-for-money audit after the fact to

make sure you got good value for this money that you allocated is because you couldn't then have treated it as March madness year-end spending and you wouldn't have been able to allocate it to last year? Is that why you didn't ask for an audit of on what was done with this money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: If our government invests \$500,000 in an organization like SISO, which is an immigrant aid organization in Hamilton that has an impeccable track record and has been trying to partner with the private sector—in fact, the Bank of Nova Scotia is partnering with them, and the city of Hamilton is going to partner with them to build a new settlement house and refugee centre just down the road. Here's what he calls fly-by-night organizations. These are organizations that my ministry has been working with. Organizations like SISO, organizations like CultureLink, organizations like the Catholic Immigration Centre in Ottawa have been working on the ground with newcomers for 20 years. They have a track record of achievement that is exemplary.

Mr. Tory: I assume that what you want us to accept, then, is that, of the hundreds of groups you see, your personal assessment of what these people do—the fact that there is no application form, no criteria, no judging panel, nobody who looks at it independently, no value-for-money audit—is adequate.

Justice Gomery said this about Adscam: "Good intentions are not an excuse for maladministration of this magnitude." He was right, and that is exactly what you're doing here: expecting us to accept the fact that you can do all of this all by yourself as one politician. That's why we need the Auditor General to look into this.

I'm asking you one more time. Tomorrow, that committee will have a motion before it asking the Auditor General to look into this. If you believe so strongly that what you've done here is absolutely right and meets the standard, if you have nothing to hide, then will you agree that the Liberal members will support that investigation to allow the auditor to get on with it, or will you ask him to do it yourself?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the expenditure of taxpayer dollars is a very, very serious matter. These organizations that we've invested in, like the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, their exemplary track record; the Newcomer Women's Services in Toronto; the North York Community House—all of these organizations—Skills for Change, an organization that has been working with newcomers, developing new programs year after year after year. We are proud to invest in those organizations, or organizations like the Greek Hellenic centre, which has been getting money from the past federal government and provincial governments of either stripe. They are building the first-ever Greek Hellenic centre right in the heart of Toronto with a partnership of their fundraising, the province of Ontario and the federal government that is going to help to integrate a lot of people.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. New Can-

adians face many challenges when they come to Ontario: learning a new language, finding a home, finding a job and overcoming financial hardship. We recognize that we have a responsibility to help them, and you have a responsibility as minister to ensure that the funds that are prescribed to help new Canadians are distributed properly and fairly, and used for the purposes for which they were intended. Over the last week, it's become clear that you have failed to do that. So the question is this: Will you bring in the Auditor General to examine what went wrong and how money that should have gone to new Canadian organizations went to a baseball museum? That's all we're asking. Will you bring in the Auditor General to examine what went wrong?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The leader of the third party still has not apologized to Angela Connors, who is the president of one of these excellent organizations that provide these services. She says that she's a card-carrying NDPer. The leader of the third party claimed that she belonged to a fly-by-night organization. He should stand up and apologize.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, what are you trying to hide? New Canadians—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. We really need to behave at a level of maturity in here that is reflective of the institution.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: New Canadians have an interest in this too. They want to know that if funds are designated to help their community organizations, those funds go to their community organizations and are used appropriately. But instead, this is what we've seen: \$200,000 handed to an organization that registers itself as an animal protection charity, which is closely linked to the local Liberal riding association; half a million dollars to a baseball museum that has nothing to do with new Canadians but is in a riding where the Liberal incumbent is facing a tough challenge; and a Liberal MP who says that if volunteers from a community organization work for a candidate from another party, they shouldn't get government funding.

Minister, why wouldn't you bring in the Provincial Auditor to look at how the money got distributed to these kinds of organizations when it should have gone to—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The leader of the third party has been around here long enough, I hope, to understand that the mandate of my ministry also deals with enhancing citizenship and volunteer participation. Right now, as we speak, there are over 9,000 citizens being recognized by our government with volunteer service awards. We also invest in heritage recognition, whereby it could be, again, the Underground Railroad, where we're recognizing and investing in the bicentenary of the slave trade and slavery. These are the kinds of things my ministry does. We're proud of what we do for new Canadians, because we've done more for new Canadians in those investments than any other government in this province.

Mr. Hampton: And if you're proud, Minister, of how some of these grants were distributed, what are you afraid of? Why wouldn't you bring in the Auditor General to look at what is happening?

Joining us today is Mustaq Ahmed, who's with Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services. His organization receives funding from the city of Toronto and from the United Way, but his organization did not receive any funding from your year-end distribution of funds. That's because they didn't know that the funding existed, just like hundreds of other good, reputable organizations didn't know this year-end funding existed, because you didn't tell them. Instead, you flowed a grant to a Liberal-connected group, with no track record and no history in the community, and you can't even produce a scrap of paper to justify it.

My question again: Why won't you bring in the Auditor General to look at how this program was administered and how organizations that were connected—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, my ministry has been working with newcomer settlement programs and their agencies. Last year, for the first time, we gave the opportunity to all of these agencies to apply for the sectoral improvement grants, capital grants, to fix up their facilities. Almost all the agencies received this upgrade—a one-time upgrade that they got. They had never received this in 15 years—all the agencies required.

There are many new agencies, there are many up-and-coming agencies and there are some that are on the margins. We are always trying to reach out to bring in more agencies and to provide more services. There are definitely more opportunities, and we continue to look for more agencies to be part of delivering these services, but it is not a static thing. It continues to grow and change.

1510

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. Minister, hard-working new Canadian families need services to help them establish themselves in Ontario. We all recognize that.

You handed the Bengali Cultural Society \$250,000 because Liberal MP Maria Minna asked you to, but we could find no criteria, no application form, and many people in the community say they don't even know about this organization. They don't even know how it got established.

That's all we're asking, Minister. These organizations that don't seem to have a clear connection to the community, that don't seem to have a history but seem to be connected to Liberal politicians: How did they get grants of a quarter of a million dollars, \$200,000, when so many reputable organizations got next to nothing?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The leader of the third party still has not apologized to one of these organizations that has been providing these services non-stop in Peel for the last 25 years. He still hasn't done that.

The other thing is that there are continuing emerging needs happening right across this province. For instance, Peel region, York region, the city of Hamilton—there are definite needs that are arising. We are trying to build more capacity by making investments in some of those emerging areas. Just as cities are not stagnant, neither are neighbourhoods, so at certain times we have to increase capacity to deliver a better service.

One of the areas that has been identified by the United Way of Greater Toronto—they said there are 13 at-risk neighbourhoods we need to invest more in because too many of our immigrants, too many of our working families don't get help. So we're building more capacity and reaching out in various neighbourhoods also.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, when government funding is prescribed to help hard-working new Canadians, that's what it should be spent on.

Joining Mr. Ahmed today are representatives from organizations representing Ontario Vietnamese, Tibetan and Somali communities. They all need funding to help them build community services, but they didn't get any funding from your year-end distribution because they didn't know that funding existed, because you didn't tell them that funding existed. These are the people who are hurt most.

Explain to these people who are here today, people you deprived of a fair opportunity to access these year-end grants, why they were denied funding while a baseball museum received a half a million dollars. Explain that to them, and explain why you won't have the Provincial Auditor look at this program and how the money was—

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the leader of the third party fails to recognize, as he has been told many times, that the ministry's mandate is also to encourage integration. That's why we partnered with the Canadian Museum of Hindu Civilization to build a wall of peace. That's also part of my mandate, because we want to ensure that all religious organizations, groups or religious beliefs feel a part of Ontario, and that all Ontarians can feel a part of visiting there.

Whether we invest in the Irish famine park down at the end of the street or whether we invest in the new centre honouring Miss Lou, the great Jamaican poet laureate, that's all part of the mandate of inclusion, of recognizing that people come from all over the world, that we want to make them feel integrated, welcome and that they are contributing to Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I fail to see what a baseball museum in a Liberal incumbent riding has to do with any of those things you've just—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I would again remind members that we need to show some respect for the institution in which we are presently working.

Leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: As I said, I fail to see what a baseball museum in a Liberal incumbent riding has to do with any

of the things you've just mentioned. Minister, it's your job to ensure that this government funding is fairly and properly distributed, that there's no playing of favourites, that everyone has a fair opportunity to apply, that every organization acts according to the rules. But here there was no application process, no criteria and no explanation as to how some of these organizations got a grant. All kinds of reputable organizations got nothing. Meanwhile, you have the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre, with no history, no expertise, except they're well connected to the Liberal Party.

Will you examine this? Will you have the Auditor General examine this so groups can find—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the province of Ontario is made up of many people from all over the world. In this government, we have recognized the founding Loyalists who made a great contribution to Ontario—that's part of the mandate of my ministry—the francophone contributions. We spend a lot of time ensuring that new immigrants can link with the understanding of the continuity of the first immigrants. We make those investments in many ways, and whether he wishes to categorize the baseball museum, which is a national museum—and we've invested in that museum in order to make it accessible for children who would not have accessibility with their wheelchairs. We think that whether it's a museum that is part of our heritage, we should encourage people to visit, whether you're disabled or not. That's what our investment was about.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration regarding your Liberal Party slush fund.

I want to go back to a question I asked you yesterday which you refused to answer. You're quoted in the Toronto Star on April 20, 2007, as saying that this money "has to go through [the] other ministers"—the Minister of Finance, who is the Liberal Party campaign chair, and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—"and ultimately, I guess, by cabinet." Those are your words, Minister.

Now, will you please tell us what direction you received from the Liberal Party campaign chair on who you should give this money to?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, over the last few years, because of the fact that we've been out in the communities, we've heard loud and clear that what we should do in Ontario is stand up and fight for fair investment in newcomer programs in this province. That's who we listen to. We listen to all the newcomers who are living below the poverty line who said, "Why should a newcomer who goes to Montreal get \$3,800 of federal funding, and if a newcomer comes to Ontario they only get \$800?" That's who we listen to. We fought hard, and now those investment dollars are being made directly to the groups and the programs in Ontario. They never were before. Those investments are because we stood up and fought

for fairness for our newcomers in Ontario. You never did that.

Mr. Yakabuski: Minister, you have to answer this question if you have any interest in transparency and accountability. Remember your Premier's throne speech. This process stinks like Adscam. Minister, you said that this had to go through the Liberal Party campaign chair before it was approved. We just want to know how it worked, especially when it appears that one of those people connected to one of these groups has made donations to the Vaughan–King–Aurora riding association.

So we want to know—clear it up for us, Minister—how, precisely, did it work? Did the Minister of Finance or his staff contact you and decide which groups were going to get the money? We'd like an answer. The people of Ontario would like one.

1520

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member from Pembroke as usual is making things up. What we are saying and what we've done is that we've ensured that all of these organizations, like Frontier College, have said very clearly that they want to partner with the government of Ontario in ensuring that our First Nations youth all across Ontario get these literacy camps. I know that the member opposite doesn't want to talk about that, but that's also part of our mandate: to ensure that our first founding people, the First Nations people of this country, also participate with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. We have done that, and we're proud of that investment in our First Nations people.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. A page has just delivered to you a document—

Interjections.

The Speaker: You seem to have a short memory. We need to respect the place. We need to remember to act as mature, mature members in this place.

Member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Minister, a page has just delivered to you a document for your review about an organization that you spoke of yesterday and again today in this Legislature and for which you have given a grant of nearly \$24,000. Will you please read the highlighted notes from that to this Legislature to explain to the Legislature exactly what your grant is all about?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, I still haven't heard the member from that party and his leader, who claimed that there was a Liberal connection in this agency in Peel region, when the president of the Peel neighbourhood community services agency is a card-carrying NDPer. How could they say that, when that organization has been getting funding from the NDP government, the Tory government and our government for the last 25 years?

Mr. Prue: Let me help the minister, who is singularly incapable of reading bad news. According to the Canadian Internet Registration Authority, the owner of the Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services website is the Mississauga West provincial Liberal riding

association. The administrative contact who pays the bill for this website is Ms. Heather McKee, treasurer of the Mississauga West provincial Liberal association, and the technical contact for the website is a Mr. Bob Delaney, who I think is known to all the people in this Legislature. Minister, you have to admit that this stinks to high heaven. I am asking you: Isn't it time that you apologize or resign and call in the auditor?

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Erie-Lincoln. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: In many of these community-based organizations providing newcomer services, there are people of all walks of life who volunteer or work there. Some of them belong to different parties, but they've been working in that field, delivering language training, the Job Connect program, some in-schools programs. They've been doing that, like this organization has, for over 20, 25, 30 years.

These organizations, again, for the last year—and the one that he's got such a problem with is one of about 80 agencies to which we, for the first time, gave a sectoral improvement grant so they could fix up their basic structure. They applied, like everyone else. They got the sectoral improvement grant because they met the criteria, which were basically on fixing the accessibility, new computers. They got help for the first time in 25 years. They were ignored for too long.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron—Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, in the beautiful riding of Huron—Bruce, many of my constituents have been asking about environmental issues. My riding touches the shores of Lake Huron, and with a very large agricultural sector, environmental issues are always of top importance.

However, it is worth noting that within this House are members of former governments and former environment ministers who, when given the chance to show leadership on environmental issues, chose reckless cuts over making investments and protecting the environment for future generations.

Minister, I see first-hand that the McGuinty government is showing leadership on environmental issues and taking action. Can you help weed through the rhetoric and the hyperbole surrounding environmental issues and share with this House the measures the government has taken to improve our environment?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I thank the member for Huron—Bruce for the question. After years of mismanagement and drastic and reckless cuts, our government, the McGuinty government, has increased the budget of the Ministry of the Environment by 22%. We are turning the corner and rebuilding a ministry that has been destroyed by not one but two former governments, who now sit on the opposite side of the House and proclaim to care about the environment.

But actions speak louder than words, and the actions that we have taken are hiring water inspectors, implementing the recommendations of the Walkerton report, funding source protection planning, passing the Clean Water Act, implementing a deposit-return system for the LCBO and creating tougher air emissions standards.

When given the chance to act and invest, we have spoken loud and clear. That is in strong contrast to our friends on the other side of the House, who are all about rhetoric.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Minister, for enlightening this House on some of the measures that the government has taken to make Ontario a cleaner and greener place.

Further to what your ministry has done, I want to know more about the entire government's environmental record. Each government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need to be able to hear the questions being put and the responses being given, and I'm having an incredibly difficult time, as I imagine many members in here are. I'm interested in hearing the question by the member for Huron—Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Each government leaves a record and a legacy. The previous NDP and Tory governments left behind a record of cuts to the Ministry of the Environment. Further, in this very assembly, members opposite opposed the Clean Water Act, opposed greenbelt legislation, opposed higher energy efficiency standards and opposed funding for public transit. The people of Ontario know that neither the NDP nor the Tories have credibility on environmental issues.

Minister, can you please let this House know of the government-wide investments that have been made into environmental issues?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Our government has taken an activist agenda. We are working across a variety of ministries to make sure that we rebuild and repair the destruction left by two former governments. Together, across a variety of ministries, we have protected 1.8 million acres in the greenbelt, we have invested billions in public transit, we have made Ontario a leader in green energy and we have reduced our emissions from our energy plants. We have a stronger building code, renewed investment in research and innovation and brown-field revitalization, and we look forward to doing much more.

1530

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and again it's back to the question: Isn't it time for the Auditor General to have an objective look at all this?

Let's go through the record here. We have the first grant given to an organization whose contact was made by a former Liberal cabinet minister—no documentation,

no paperwork. In fact, you asked them for paperwork after you gave them the money. Then we have the second one, which has seven out of seven of its directors contributing directly to the Liberal Party. The office of this organization is the law office of the Liberal president, and on the board is the Liberal provincial candidate, and it has connections to the Liberal Party campaign chair. Now we have a non-profit organization that received money from your ministry that has its website registered and owned by the Liberal riding association, with the technical contact being an employee of one of the Liberal members of the assembly.

Don't you think it's time—if you don't want this to get worse, if you don't want public confidence to be further eroded, if you want to get to the bottom of this and come clean and try to salvage some of your own reputation—that you agreed that you will have the public accounts committee—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I've made it very clear here that one of our biggest and proudest investments was in the United Jewish Appeal, which is raising almost \$300 million to create an incredible contribution to the GTA in everything from health care to seniors' care to the Holocaust Memorial Centre. All this is being done. Those are the kinds of partners, big and small, that are also part of our ministry.

Here is the member who was kind of reckless the other day when he immediately looked at a name and said, "Oh, that gentleman there has got to be Mr. Atma Singh." As Mr. Singh said, if it had been John Smith, he would have known that there might be more than one John Smith. But it's something different: he didn't take the time.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Simcoe-Grey, I won't warn you again.

Mr. Tory: That sort of implication is beneath the office you hold as a minister of the crown. I'll tell you something else: I had the common decency to come into this House and apologize to the two people—apologize to them in person and apologize to the House.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We've got to the point that the next one who interjects, regardless of what side of the House they're on, will be leaving this place.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: There is taxpayers' money involved here. It has been allocated to various and sundry groups without application, without criteria, without a review process, without anybody looking at it, without any audit of what's done with the money after the fact. We're asking you: Will you agree to have the Liberal members work with us tomorrow to request that the auditor come in and examine this so the public will be able to have their confidence restored and know that this money was

properly looked after? It's a simple request. You should do it as a matter of honour and as a matter of preserving integrity in what we do here in this place, which is to look after the taxpayers' money. Will you agree to do—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Leader of the Opposition was so quick to condemn two individuals before he checked his facts, he was so quick to question some of these new founding organizations in the gurdwaras—to see the good work they do.

I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition that we're proud as a government to invest in long-established organizations that have been doing great work in heritage preservation, providing language training for newcomers, providing Meals on Wheels. Those are the kinds of organizations we have partnered with. Their track records are long and strong. We are also trying to ensure that new, emerging organizations also become part of the fabric of making Ontario a better place.

I would ask the member opposite not to be so reckless and not to judge, especially the smaller organizations, which may not have 10 lawyers on their board of governors and which may not have people that speak perfect English, but their volunteerism is worth as much as anybody else's volunteerism.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, you've now had five or so minutes to have a good look at this document. You've had a chance to read it. What it says is that the domain icnss.ca is registered to the Mississauga West Provincial Liberal Association. A description is given: "The Mississauga West Provincial Liberal Association is an Ontario riding association serving members of the Ontario Liberal Party in the Mississauga West constituency."

Can you tell me, Minister, how it is that that Liberal riding association thinks it's okay to pay for the bills and to register the domain for this group of which you speak so highly?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I still wish the member had the guts to apologize to Ms. Connors for the fact that he said that this was a fly-by-night group. He's basically continuing that today.

As I said, if you go to Kingston, Cornwall or London, there are organizations that have volunteer participation. What we look at is the work they do. You know what they do? When a person comes crying into their office, they're the ones that give them relief, and they may not have anywhere else to go. When they don't have a place to live, when they're frustrated after three years of having no job—these organizations across this province, big and small, have been ignored for the last 20 years. We're the first government that all of a sudden tries to invest in and improve their service delivery, and the member opposite stands up and says that this group here and that group there doesn't meet his standards. Well, I have a lot of faith in these community-based organizations. They do great things.

Mr. Prue: The only standards not being met in this House are the standards set by this minister—this minister who has not done due diligence; this minister who has not checked the domain; this minister who has not looked into the groups in any way at all and who has not recognized the associations. This is a minister who has failed all of us.

Can you tell me, Minister, if it's all right for this group to have the domain registered by the Liberal Party? Is it all right to have the fees paid by the Liberal Party? Is it all right to have the technical contact and the changes to the domain and the website done by the Liberal Party and still qualify for funds under your regime?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This organization, Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services, like the Jamaican Canadian Association—all these organizations have been working with governments of all stripes. They worked with the NDP when they were in power. They got money from the NDP. They got money from the Conservatives—very little—they got some investments from the Conservatives. My ministry has continued to work with those partners.

This is one of about 82 partners we work with, and we look at their track record of delivering those language services, those 24-hour hotlines for women who need translation services. We work with the Barbra Schlifer centre. Do we go look at the Barbra Schlifer domain to see who's running the domain? We believe the Barbra Schlifer centre offers an incredible 24/7 language service. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the women's directorate have invested in the Barbra Schlifer centre because they do great work. That's who we—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Culture. Minister, as you will most certainly recall, this government's 2003 election platform contained a stand-alone arts and culture policy. In it we made several important commitments to artists, one being the establishment of a new award for outstanding individuals and organizations in the arts field—the Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Minister, can you please update us on this commitment and share with us more information about this award, an award that demonstrates in a highly tangible way how highly we value and celebrate our Ontario artists?

1540

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I have to thank the member for London North Centre for her strong commitment to arts and culture. We have, for the very first time in this province's history, awarded the Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts announced earlier this year. Peggy Baker, an accomplished dancer and appointee to both the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario, was awarded a \$35,000 prize associated with

this award. I would like to recognize Ms. Baker, who is with us in the Legislature, and thank her for her contribution to this province's arts and cultural fabric.

As an annual prize, the Premier's award will continue to recognize each year talented individuals and organizations in our province and the impressive contributions that they make to our society and to Ontario's rich arts and cultural sector.

Ms. Matthews: The fact that we're recognizing our established artists is a testament to this government's recognition of the important role that arts and culture play in our lives every day. Minister, acknowledging, appreciating and celebrating our accomplished artists is indeed very important, but what are we doing to support new and emerging artists to allow them to create an environment in which they can flourish?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: While recognizing that accomplished talent is very important, we must also nurture new artists' potential. That is why the annual Premier's award includes a \$15,000 prize for an emerging artist chosen by the award's recipient. This year, Ms. Baker chose to honour Yvonne Ung, a very talented artist and teacher at York University. Ms. Ung is also with us today. I welcome her to this House, and I want to congratulate her again.

Supporting our artists is incredibly important, which is why we also introduced the Status of Ontario's Artists Act. In partnership with other ministries, we have created training programs for artists, are providing them with affordable housing, and are working to strengthen protection for child performers.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: We have, by your own admission, hundreds of groups that contacted you over the course of the past year. You have selected, with some help, by your own admission, from the Minister of Finance—who also doubles as the campaign chair for the Liberal Party—31 groups that got this money. One of them has seven out of seven Liberals on its board of directors as contributors to the Liberal Party. Another group that we hear about today has a website owned by the Liberal provincial riding association. The whole process was done without any notice to the public. It was done without application forms. It was done without a selection committee.

You haven't even tried to answer any of the questions here in the House today, but the simplest one of all is this: We don't even need the public accounts committee to initiate bringing the Auditor General in to look at this and, by the way, clear your name, clear the air and restore public confidence; you, yourself, as minister could ask the Auditor General to come in and look at this program. Will you do that, or do you have something to hide? Why wouldn't you ask the auditor to come in to confirm all the things you've said today—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Again, the member opposite is so easy to name members of the Liberal association that may belong to some organizations, but he fails to recognize that I'm sure there are many Conservatives on many organizations. The difference between this member and reality is that many of our organizations have Conservatives on them, NDP and Liberal. Again, our largest investment is made up of nine people who have donated to the Conservative Party of Ontario. As I said emphatically, I have no qualms about this government investing in that incredible contribution that the UJA is making to this province because we base it on what they've raised themselves through volunteerism. They've raised over \$250 million. They're going to partner with the federal government and hopefully with us. So we look at what they're doing, not what party they belong to.

Mr. Tory: It's obvious you're so busy not looking at what party people belong to, you can tell me exactly how many members of every board belong to which party. It's just so ridiculous that you come in here and make that argument.

Let's look at the one that I'm talking about. The one in question started off as an animal help organization. We know already that there was correspondence going back and forth between the Liberal campaign chair and finance minister and this organization. We know that one of the key people, a director, was a contributor directly to the Liberal finance minister and campaign chair's campaign. We know all seven directors—not nine out of 40 but seven out of seven—contributed to the Liberal Party. We know that the address of the organization is the office of the Liberal riding president and we know the Liberal candidate is on the board.

Do you have any idea how this looks and how this undermines public confidence in this place and what we're supposed to be doing with the taxpayers' money? Get up and say you'll ask the auditor to come in. Have some guts.

Hon. Mr. Colle: One interesting example is North York Community House, another one of these incredible organizations that does incredible work in North York. It used to be part of St. Stephen's Community House and moved to expand its services. The founder of that organization was none other than my good friend Councillor Howard Moscoe. He founded that organization based on—remember the anonymous \$1-million grant that somebody gave? He brought together that organization, and it has done incredible work in North York for the last 25 years.

Since the Conservatives gave resources to North York Community House, since the NDP gave resources, were we as a government going to say, "We can't contribute to North York Community House because Howard Moscoe founded North York Community House"? We base our resources and partnership on the track record. When the new emerging communities do a good job, we try to partner with them.

The Speaker: New question.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, we are joined today by representatives of the Vietnamese Women's Association of Toronto and the Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario, two community organizations among many in Parkdale–High Park. These community groups work incredibly hard for their constituents. They are groups of long standing. None of them were advised of application forms; none of them were advised that there was funding available; none of them were advised of this end-of-year fund. They would have applied.

Minister, don't answer us and don't answer the Speaker—answer them. Please, tell them why they didn't receive funding from your year-end fund while organizations with Liberal supporters did make the list.

Hon. Mr. Colle: We recognize that many communities in Ontario, inner-city communities like the Parkdale area, need investments. That's why we're proud to have invested in CultureLink in Parkdale–High Park—an amazing organization—Kababayan Community Centre in Parkdale–High Park and Parkdale Intercultural Association.

The thing that we've done which the NDP never did and failed to do is that when we found out that newcomers in Ontario were being shortchanged, we went to battle for newcomers. The NDP were silent. As a result of us going to fight for newcomers' equity, \$920 million is now going to be available over the next five years for newcomers. The good thing I want to say to the groups that came today is that because of that there is more opportunity for more investment. There has never been that opportunity. Now all these programs are being expanded, like ISAP, Settlement Workers in Schools, the host programs. They've never had expansion. Because we fought for them, now there is hope for expansion—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

1550

Ms. DiNovo: Minister, you did not answer the question. I asked you to answer to these organizations. They would like to know where the application forms were, when the money was made available, how they should have gone to apply for the \$20 million that was handed out. They are organizations that do amazing work in Parkdale–High Park. They're among many, including CultureLink, that would like to know about the \$20 million as well. I talked to them yesterday and the day before. We would like to know where they could have gotten the application forms, how the money was handed out and why they weren't considered. Could you please answer the question? Not to the Speaker, not to us—to them. Why were they not considered worthy of your end-of-the-year largesse? Please answer.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The good thing is, there are now finally resources available to existing groups that there never were before. There are now grants available from the federal government to expand services that there have never been before. So whether it's the 82 groups that

have been living on a shoestring for the last 20 years or new groups that want to come and present proposals for NSP programs, for ISAP programs, the federal government—they are now available because we fought for the money to come to Ontario. The NDP were missing in action. They didn't fight for that equity. Now the resources are here. Now all groups that exist and new ones can have a greater share of these resources for newcomers.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. David Oraziatti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is for the Minister of Labour. I know the minister is sitting right in front of me, but it's very important for all of us to hear the good news about the employment standards services improvements. This past Monday, on your behalf, I was pleased to announce in Sault Ste. Marie, at the provincial claims centre in Roberta Bondar Place that we'll be hiring 15 new employment standards staff, thanks to an additional \$1-million investment. To date, over 300 additional public sector positions have come to Sault Ste. Marie under the McGuinty government. Thanks for your support, Minister. As we know, this investment will allow your ministry to continue to make great strides in improving enforcement of employment standards in Ontario.

After years of neglect, it is this government that is making long-awaited changes to better protect workers in our province, and particularly the most vulnerable. Minister, can you please tell us more about how this investment will help enforce employment standards?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie, and as well for his advocacy on this issue, because he recognizes that one of the most important things that we have to do within the Ministry of Labour is to be proactive and move forward with targeted inspections. That's why in 2003 we had 151 targeted inspections. But we recognized that we needed to do more—in 2004 and 2005, over 2,300 targeted inspections in the province of Ontario.

But I think what's important is that we believe in enforcing the law. Under the NDP and the Tories, over a six-year period—from 1990 to 2003—97 prosecutions. Since 2004, we've initiated over 1,000 prosecutions.

Mr. Oraziatti: Thank you, Minister, for your support and for sharing these impressive results. I know the constituents in every riding across the province will be pleased to learn these facts, just as mine were on Monday, and just as they were pleased to learn that 15 more civil service jobs will be coming to Sault Ste. Marie to help improve the efficiency in the employment standards claims process.

Our government understands the importance of civil servants, unlike the NDP, who ripped up the contracts of thousands of civil service workers, and unlike the Conservatives, who closed hospitals and schools and fired thousands of nurses in the process. We understand that public workers not only stimulate the local economy

but provide valuable public services to residents across the province of Ontario.

When a constituent approaches my office for assistance on a labour-related matter, the matter is often related to employment standards. It's great to know that we're making investments to protect some of the most vulnerable workers in the province of Ontario. I know that the \$1 million of funding allocated to my riding of Sault Ste. Marie will help do just that.

Minister, can you please tell us how much more money was allocated to the employment standards budget in 2007 and what else you'll be doing with the new funding?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I again want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie, because he certainly recognized something that two previous governments did not recognize in this province: that we take pride in the civil service in Ontario. I take pride that Ministry of Labour staff are there protecting vulnerable workers. They are there protecting and enforcing the Occupational Health and Safety Act. After two previous governments of inaction, we've made a commitment. We have confidence and faith, and we've restored and invested in the public service in this province.

We have 144 employees that are responsible for the enforcement of employment standards in this province. They deal with over 20,000 claims a year. We make sure that vulnerable workers are looked after. As well, we recognize that because of the success of our programs, we need to make sure that we continue to invest in our public service. That's why we've allocated additional funds to hire additional workers in our public service, so we can do a better job of protecting vulnerable workers. We need to make sure that employees understand their rights and that employers understand their responsibilities. We do that in partnership with the public service.

PETITIONS

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

HUMBER RIVER REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): It gives me great pleasure to present this petition of more than 5,000 signatures collected by dozens of members of the Humber River Health Coalition. I introduced some of them earlier today. I do want to add the presence of Sharon, Joseph and Anthony Makkas. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas, on December 19, 2005, Humber River Regional Hospital received approval from the government of Ontario to build a modern regional acute care hospital; and

"Whereas the management of HRRH has made its intentions known not to build the new hospital on the Finch site; and

"Whereas the management of HRRH has not held adequate public consultations regarding site selection with the affected communities that it serves; and

"Whereas the Finch site offers the best existing infrastructure and strategic advantages, including existing private medical professional buildings and labs, private long-term-care facilities, excellent transportation, police, fire and hotel services, for the new HRRH hospital, and this site offers the most benefits for the least cost;

"Whereas our community donated over \$25 million for the expansion of the Finch site;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to require the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the management of the Humber River Regional Hospital to hold open and transparent public consultations on site selection for the new Humber River Regional Hospital with residents of the affected communities before a final decision is made."

I am proud to affix my signature in support of this petition and hand it to page Mirabai.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the standing orders, it is now 4 o'clock. Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today, my BlackBerry went off in the House. The table gave me a very strange look about the rules involved with BlackBerries. I would seek clarification with respect to proper decorum because I know that none of us on either side of the

House want to offend the House. I look forward to your report back on that particular issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you very much. As you would know, if a BlackBerry or any other device goes off in the Legislature, that is not appropriate and it would be taken away by the Sergeant at Arms.

1600

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL SAFETY), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (DISCIPLINE PROGRESSIVE ET SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Ms. Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety / Projet de loi 212, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne le comportement, la discipline et la sécurité.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Ms. Wynne has moved second reading of Bill 212. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I rise in the House today for second reading of legislation that would improve student safety in our schools. I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Guelph–Wellington, my parliamentary assistant, Mrs. Sandals.

I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this legislation. This is a piece of legislation that we have been looking forward to bringing to the House. Our government firmly believes that all students and staff have the right to feel safe and to be safe at school and on school grounds.

Ce milieu d'apprentissage ne peut résulter que d'une approche équitable et efficace de la sécurité dans les écoles.

The zero tolerance policy introduced by the former government was seen by many to be at best ineffective and unfair, and at worst an attempt to promote a politically motivated, superficially punitive discipline culture. It did not appear to be creating the safe school environment that our children deserve. Furthermore, we knew when we came into office, anecdotally, that there were children and their families who felt that their lives had been damaged by this regime.

That is why we launched our safe schools action team to review the safe schools provisions of the Education Act and related policies and programs. This team was led by my colleague MPP Liz Sandals, and I want to thank Liz sincerely for her work on this file. Any of you who know the member for Guelph–Wellington know that she has a deep understanding and experience of education and the school setting, and her even-handed and judicious

style has been of tremendous value in formulating the government response to the team's findings.

One of the strengths of our government's approach to developing policy in general has been that before we finalize a policy direction, we talk to the people who are most affected and who are most knowledgeable about the issue. So the action team conducted broad public consultation and based its report on what it heard from hundreds of people across the province, people from all backgrounds. Its report documented serious discrepancies in consistency and fairness in the application of the safe schools provisions of the Education Act, and I just want to quote a couple of statistics.

Some of the ranges of application are indicated by the fact that, for instance, the range in suspensions across the province went from some boards having a range of 2.13% suspensions to 35% suspensions. The other thing that was of concern was the bump in expulsions that happened once the provisions that had been brought in by the previous government had been enacted. So in 2000-01, when, really, the provisions hadn't had time to take hold, the number of students expelled across the province was 106. By 2004-05, the number of expulsions across the province was 1,888. Clearly, there was something going on with this legislation that been brought in by the previous government that was not just, that was problematic.

What we believe is that students who make mistakes are being suspended now under the current regime, before this legislation is passed, without consideration for the reason behind their actions. This only puts those students further behind in their school work and more likely to disrupt classes and drop out before graduation, which is clearly not the effect you'd want safe school legislation to have. It's also clear that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work when it comes to student safety and discipline.

In addition, the team's report concluded that the current safe schools provisions in the Education Act are ineffective in reducing bullying and harassment in our schools. In fact, bullied students are not being properly protected. Many of them are losing self-confidence and are watching their grades plummet as a result of that.

We know from the team's work that there are students in some parts of the province who have been expelled from school on what is currently a limited expulsion for whom there are no programs available and no formal academic or social support.

All of these findings that the team uncovered as they went around the province pointed to a clear need for change and reinforced the concerns many of us shared from the time the previous government introduced this policy. The safe schools action team report led us to the response we're making in this legislation.

What they also did was bring us some good news: a new direction about how we might create an immediate positive impact on student safety and what kind of measures we should put in place, what kinds of strategies we might employ.

My colleague Liz Sandals is going to speak to some of the specifics of their investigation and what some of their process was as they went around the province. But based on the recommendations the team made, we've tabled amendments to the Education Act that would more effectively combine discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education. These amendments would ensure that there are strong consequences for inappropriate behaviour, but also that there are programs that allow students to earn their way back into the classroom, and if they are out of the classroom on a long-term suspension, that there would be supports in place for those students.

The amendments we're putting in place would include adding bullying as an infraction for which suspensions must be considered. That strengthens the legislation in that area where we know there is great concern.

One of the issues that came up most often after I introduced this legislation in the House was cyber-bullying, and the changes to the legislation would include the possibility for schools to respond to behaviours that may not technically take place in school but that would have an adverse effect on school climate. This is a reality our students are dealing with.

As I said, bullying is not currently listed as an infraction, and I believe it's about time we recognize the seriousness of these behaviours. I know that there will be questions about definitions of bullying. We're going to work with the definition that was hammered out by the action team, and that will be finalized in policy guidelines.

We also propose using a progressive discipline approach to choose the appropriate punishment in each case of inappropriate behaviour. To any of us here who have attempted in our lives to be judicious parents, that approach only makes sense. Suspension and expulsion would then be two options to be considered along a continuum of progressive discipline, as opposed to the first reaction. That continuum also includes in-school suspensions and referrals for consultation.

Another change that would be made would include eliminating mandatory suspensions and expulsions for students. I want to make it clear that that's except in limited circumstances. By that I mean that in the case of a very violent or serious incident where expulsion would have been mandatory before, a student would now be suspended pending a decision on expulsion. What this provision would do is ensure that students who may be a danger to others would be removed from the classroom, removed from the school, while a decision is made whether or not expel that student. Then, if there were an expulsion, as I said before, there would be a program in place. If that student completed that program, they'd be able to earn their way back into the classroom. There's a logical process that students would follow if they have been involved in incidents. In all other circumstances, principals and school boards would be required to consider and respond to all infractions that occur in the most appropriate way they can.

If the legislation passes, we'd require that mitigating factors be considered before students are suspended or expelled. These factors would include, among other things, the safety of other students, whether racial or other forms of harassment were involved and whether the behaviour was related to a disability or the age of the student. Finally, when students are expelled, there would need to be a program in place once the decision had been made. We would require that there be a program in place. In order for the student to return to school, the student would have to go through that program, and any student who was suspended for more than five days would also have the opportunity to attend a program that boards would be required to provide.

One of the most frequent concerns I've heard from parents and community members alike is that if a child is removed from school, it is only logical that there be a program available to that student in order to facilitate a productive return to school. That's in the best interests of the child, it's in the best interests of the family, but surely, it's in the best interests of all of us in society, because we need each of those students to reach his or her potential. That will never happen as long as kids are relegated to the mall or relegated to the streets because we have not provided opportunities for those students to be in programs with adults who are paying attention to their social and academic needs. So this legislation, if passed, would begin to address those very challenges.

1610

The changes that we are introducing would clarify decision-making authority around suspensions and expulsions for principals and school boards. As it stands now, teachers have the authority to suspend students, principals have the authority to expel students on a limited expulsion and boards have the authority to expel on a full expulsion. If this legislation is passed, only principals would have the authority to suspend and boards would have the authority to expel. Our goal with this proposed legislation is safer schools and discipline that works.

I'm going to turn to my parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph-Wellington, to talk about her experience with the safe schools action team. I am very, very grateful to all the members of the safe schools action team for the work they did. We've been working on a bullying initiative, and I know the member for Guelph-Wellington is going to talk to that. We are bringing in some students from around the province to talk to us about the safe use of the Internet. If we're going to be able to put protocols and procedures and rules in place for the Facebook generation, we have to talk to students who are dealing with these technologies every day, invasive as they are, and none of us in this Legislature grew up with those technologies. We need to be listening to the students in our schools about how to put rules around those technologies and the experiences they are having right now.

But the strategies in this legislation will make discipline in our schools in this province more rational. It

will move away from a superficial regime that was put in place by the previous government. The changes are based on the feedback we got from people in the community who understand what's going on in our schools.

Nous faisons ce qu'il faut pour améliorer la sécurité dans les écoles de l'Ontario et pour accroître la réussite des élèves.

The result will be more students reaching their full potential and a more prosperous Ontario.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): As the minister has mentioned, I had the privilege of chairing the safe schools action team that undertook the task of reviewing the Safe Schools Act and listening to the concerns of parents, educators and communities. I'm pleased to see our recommendations reflected in the suggested changes to the act because our recommendations were a reflection of the input we received from parents, educators and community members. I believe that the proposed changes would make a real difference in our schools.

The minister spoke a bit about the work of the safe schools action team, but I'd like to tell you more about that. The original Safe Schools Act was introduced in 2000 by the previous government. Since the act's implementation, a number of concerns have been raised. In response to those concerns, our government made a commitment to review the Safe Schools Act. The review was also part of our government's overall safe schools strategy. It is vital that our students and staff are safe and feel safe in our schools. We wanted to make sure that we had the opportunity to hear what those concerns were and to discuss school safety and the Safe Schools Act with communities across the province. We held consultations in Ottawa, London, Etobicoke, Scarborough, Sudbury and Thunder Bay. We heard from more than 700 parents, teachers, students and other community members. Participants exchanged their ideas in more than 100 round-table discussions. Anyone who was not able to attend one of these discussions had the opportunity to send us their input in writing. We received over 100 written submissions from organizations, school boards and individuals, truly a review in which we heard from a tremendous number of people with a tremendous number of concerns.

When we conducted the review, we focused on four main areas: consistency, fairness, methods of discipline and prevention. We looked at consistency because data indicated that the safe schools legislation was not being applied consistently across Ontario. As the minister mentioned, the rate of suspensions and expulsions varied widely from board to board, and in fact from school to school within boards. For example, if you look at suspension rates, they varied from 2% to 35% of all the students in one board.

We also found that in some areas of the province, expelled students had access to alternative programs that allowed them to continue their studies and receive help with their behaviour issues. In other areas of the province, alternative programs were simply not available and

students who were expelled largely ended up dropping out of school permanently.

We discussed fairness, because some groups were seen to be more likely to be suspended or expelled than others. A number of concerns were raised that the legislation and related school board discipline policies were having a disproportionate impact on racial minorities and disabled students.

We looked at discipline. Under the existing safe schools legislation, teachers, principals and school boards are allowed to use some judgment in making decisions about suspensions and expulsions. We heard that principals and boards should be given more discretion in deciding whether to suspend or expel students and what is the most appropriate discipline, given the particular circumstances. Some boards applied the concept of progressive or graduated discipline; others used a much more zero-tolerance approach. When progressive discipline was used, a student was given a more significant consequence for unacceptable behaviour if the student had been disciplined for the same behaviour previously within a reasonable time frame.

We also focused on prevention. There was a perception that safe schools legislation did not strike the right balance, focusing more on discipline than on preventing behaviours leading to suspensions and expulsions in the first place. More than 60% of students who were suspended changed their behaviour and were not suspended again or expelled. However, the concern remains that not enough is being done currently to prevent the behaviours that lead to suspension and expulsion.

Through these consultations, we heard that there were discrepancies in consistency, fairness and methods of discipline, and a lack of focus on prevention.

We submitted our report to the minister in June 2006. The report presents a summary of our findings through these consultations and submissions, and identifies eight areas for priority action. I would like to highlight some of those areas to you now.

As mentioned, we looked at prevention. Through our consultations, we found that the people of Ontario recognize the importance of prevention strategies that will deter inappropriate behaviours and help all students make sound personal decisions. The team made recommendations about using a progressive discipline approach. Our findings suggested that schools should look at the range of consequences that are appropriate. This includes focusing on improving behaviour and giving students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes as opposed to simply kicking them out. As part of this, the circumstances surrounding the incident should be taken into consideration; for example, factors such as whether or not bullying was a factor.

We discussed developing programs for suspended or expelled students, to provide opportunities for students to continue their education and to help students successfully reintegrate into the school setting or an alternative setting.

We also recommended education for parents and training for school staff, because we heard that in many

cases, particularly with parents, they didn't really quite understand what the rules were.

I should point out that the \$31 million the government has allocated annually, beginning in 2007-08—that is, this budget year—includes funding for training principals and vice-principals in ways to apply discipline in a non-discriminatory manner.

In addition, we looked at community and parent involvement, consistent application of the Safe Schools Act, communication with the community and a provincial safe schools framework that would tie the various pieces of legislation, policy and guidelines that affect student behaviour into one comprehensive document.

1620

The safe schools action team also reported on bullying prevention in Ontario schools. During our consultations on bullying, we were told that in many schools bullying was not taken seriously. We also learned that many students are affected by bullying in its various forms: physical, verbal, social or, as is becoming increasingly common, Internet bullying.

The action team provided a definition that covers all forms of bullying. Our reports define bullying as a form of repeated aggression used from a position of power, which can be physical, verbal or social. It is a dynamic of unhealthy interaction, and includes repeated aggression as opposed to just a singular incident.

As the minister mentioned in her remarks, our findings on bullying have also been addressed in the proposed amendments to the Education Act, and the safe schools action team, which feels quite passionately about bullying, was very pleased to see that.

Our recommendations in both reports were grounded in several guiding principles:

- Every student is entitled to learn to the best of his or her ability;

- Every student is entitled to a safe and caring learning environment;

- Safety is a precondition for learning; and

- Safe schools are the responsibility of a community partnership among government ministries, administrators, teachers, trustees, support staff, students, parents, police and community partners.

These principles reflect a shared vision, an acknowledgement of the importance of safety in our schools and the need to take action. In fact, we titled our report *Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action*, because we believe that there was action that could be taken, and this is exactly what our new government is doing with this legislation.

We asked, we listened and now we are taking action with our proposed amendments to improve safe schools legislation. I am pleased that the amendments we are proposing now follow up on the action team's recommendations. These proposed changes offer a better, fairer, more equitable approach to ensuring safety in our schools while also ensuring that our students can achieve their full potential, and they are evidence of our government's determination to work in partnership with educators and

communities across the province. We are listening to their concerns.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the safe schools action team for their commitment and dedication to such an important issue and their tremendous work over a matter of years, and I'd like to recognize them individually.

The members of the team were Stu Auty, president of the Canadian Safe School Network; Dr. Inez Eliston, a director of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation; Ray Hughes, who is with the Centre for Prevention Science at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and works specifically on prevention programs with students; Dr. Debra Pepler, who is a researcher in bullying with York University and Sick Kids Hospital; and Lynn Ziraldo, past chair of the minister's advisory committee on special education and president of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. I was extraordinarily fortunate to be working with a group of experts who are highly respected across the province.

I would also like to thank everyone, and that's over 1,000 people when you look at both consultation regimes, who participated in the discussions and provided us with such valuable input. We received informed and positive suggestions that will have a real impact in schools.

These proposed changes will go a long way to making our schools safer and providing a supportive learning environment for Ontario students. I look forward to the continuing debate, which I obviously hope will lead to passage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): I had an opportunity to talk to our critic about this bill earlier today, and I'm sure he will express his thoughts at greater length than I will in my brief minute or two here. His concerns reflected a few things, and one is that this whole process has taken far too long. We knew three and a half or four years ago that we had a problem. We knew that the bill, the legislation that existed when this government came to power, was hugely problematic. We did not have to wait three and a half years to come to the point where we recognized that simply expelling or suspending kids who are problems was simply going to move the problem onto the street and mean more difficulties for society.

The other point that our critic raised with me and that I imagine he will raise with this Legislature as a whole is that if the social supports aren't out there to deal with the problems that generate destructive behaviour in the first place, then, frankly, this legislation will not go far. We have school boards that are already facing profound financial problems. This legislation rightly requires them to provide programs so that those who have been suspended will actually have somewhere to go. The question I have to ask the minister is, where is the money to do that?

Last night, I was at a meeting in my riding with a youth worker—he doesn't work in my riding because the

city of Toronto doesn't have enough money to cover big chunks of my riding—telling me about the work he's done in Beaches—East York. The work he does is extraordinarily valuable, but the city of Toronto faces profound financial problems and really is in no position to expand the system of youth workers, who you actually have to have on the ground if you're going to deal with problematic and destructive behaviour. Legislation is useful, but it has to be on a foundation of finances and resources.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I want to compliment and thank the minister and the parliamentary assistant for bringing this legislation forward. I get to speak to this a little bit in terms of a unique circumstance: For 25 years I was an educator, 12 of those as a principal. I can tell you there's a very large number of stakeholders who wanted us to get this right, and I want to say that I believe the minister and the parliamentary assistant have done a great job of getting this right.

Contrary to what has just been said, it does take time to make sure that, with stakeholder participation, we come in with the right balance. We can't just haphazardly throw down the gauntlet of zero tolerance and say that we've got it solved. That's an easy solution. I'm hoping that we're going to get some rational conversation about how we take care of bullying and cyber bullying.

The evolution of schools that has taken place, even from the time I was there, from the very moment I got in there—we used to talk to parents, and the problem in my school was that they weren't doing their homework. My God, have we got some bigger problems than that now, with the evolution of what we have to face for those kids today.

I want to thank the professional groups: OECTA, OSSTF, ETFO, the French boards, the trustee associations, the school councils, the parent councils, the PTAs and the home and school associations. Look, this is an issue of a village, and all of us together will solve this problem. But if we keep yanking each other apart and trying to create the crisis and make the war, we're not going to solve this problem.

This is about the ability or the capacity of those kids to learn. In the first school I was the principal of, we had five incidents per break at the school during the day, all the way through. That's 25 different incidents I had to deal with on a daily basis in a school that was inundated with problems of violence. We put programs together. All of us, working together, decided that in this school, we weren't going to do this anymore, and we dropped to three a week from 25 a day.

It can be done, and I think this legislation helps us get there.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The minister and her parliamentary assistant make interesting comments, but as was so rightly pointed out, the funding issue seems to be lacking, as with so much of this government. You see more and more great announcements being made, but they're not properly funded. Where is the money going to come from to make all these things—you know, if you

have an expulsion take place and the student has to go somewhere, "somewhere" has to encourage that student to get back into the mainstream. How do you do that? That is not an inexpensive process. It is something that needs almost a one-on-one in order to encourage that student to see their way clear to participate again in the mainstream of education. I don't see the funding coming with this bill, and that's of great concern, when there isn't the commitment from government that will make that kind of commitment to these students, some of whom will reach great heights. In the past, if you look at our society, you will see a lot of very successful business people who have dropped out of school at an early age. They dropped out at 16, they dropped out at 17 or 18, and they have gone on to be very successful business people because something came along and motivated them. It would be a shame to lose those people from our system because of a lack of finance or a lack of commitment to a program like this.

1630

It reminds me a little bit of the environment bill that came in at the 11th hour of this government. There's an election coming, so we need an educational program, we need an environmental program. Lo and behold, we've introduced a bill that gives an election program based on education, based on the environment. I think there's very little substance to this. I think it's more window dressing, and I think it has more to do with election.

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: Quite a while ago. It has more to do with election than with education—

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot): I too want to join my colleagues in heaping praise not only on the minister, who gets it, but on the parliamentary assistant, who got the job done, who was out there slogging with our partners every single day to put together the kinds of proposals and recommendations that would make a difference and that could move us in a practical way from zero tolerance to infinite hope, a whole different approach to education, and one that I think, on a good day, we want to celebrate.

We need to find ways to get into creating an equality of opportunity here so that we can move away from the lucky and the left-out. Zero tolerance—you talk about expense, if you want to look at the expense down the road. Zero tolerance, you know, "Get the hell out of here; we don't want you around," is not the way to go. Providing some hopeful links so that young people can, with some guidance, acquire and understand the importance of some new ways of behaving and in fact can be motivated by people who know something about motivation—yes, that's going to be an expensive process. Some members opposite must have missed the \$31-million reference to train principals and vice-principals around bullying and some of those issues.

If we want a positive school climate not just based on bookkeeping but based really on student success, we should do the right thing and embrace this progressive legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs. Sandals: Thank you for the comments from the members for Toronto—Danforth, Brant, Halton and Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot. I just want to say that I'm sorry that some of the opposition members are so cynical about this bill. We've taken the time to consult and to get it right. While this may seem to some of the opposition members like an exercise in public relations, I've got to tell you that in terms of the substance and the positive reaction to both of the safe schools reports and to this actual bill, which will make significant changes for kids, we have had virtually unanimous positive reaction, save and except the opposition, who after all are charged with opposing.

However, let's talk about the money. There are \$31 million committed in this year's budget and each and every following budget to implement the changes. Of that money, \$23 million is specifically committed to going to school boards to allow them to set up the alternative programs that will allow students who have been long-term suspended or expelled to continue contact with the education system and to get support with the issues that are leading to their bad behaviour in the first place. I'm very pleased. This was one of the action team's recommendations, that not only did we have to put programs in place, but we needed to fund them, and that has happened.

Let me tell you some of the other things we've already done. There's \$7.8 million for bullying prevention programs already spent, \$4.5 million being spent, as we speak, for training for bullying prevention for teachers, \$1.2 million already spent for training for principals and vice-principals, and \$3.2 million already spent on the security of schools.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I want to start off my comments by thanking the minister and thanking the parliamentary assistant for their work in looking into how we can improve safety in our schools. I have no doubt that their intention was very good, that their approach to this was with the most—how can I put this?—sincere of intentions. I wouldn't for one minute doubt that.

I also want to thank the safe schools action team for the work they did because I know that they worked very hard, and again well intentioned. When I look at the substance of the report, there isn't anything in that report that I'm going to take exception with. I would support it; I do support it. At the very outset I will say that while we will have proposed amendments to this legislation, because it is not perfect—and I have yet to see legislation come to this House, tabled by government or private members' bills, that is perfect in its initial proposal—I have every intention of wanting to support the bill and hope to be able to vote in favour of this legislation when it comes before us for third and final reading.

I'm hopeful that the government will also work with the opposition parties towards improving the legislation, contrary to the government's approach typically to legislation that they bring forward, where, regardless of what

the amendments are that we bring forward, as a rule, when we get to standing committee, all of those opposition amendments are somehow unanimously voted down by government members of the committee. It's uncanny how consistently members of the government think alike when it comes to these issues. Far be it from me to suggest that somehow they've been whipped into those decisions, because I highly regard most members of the government on a personal level. I know they're good thinkers on their own. It's when the invisible whip walks into the room that somehow there seem to be the constant nays that arise from members of the government in committee. But I'm hopeful. I'm going to be positive this time around that we'll have some co-operation and some good, objective thinking about how we can improve this legislation.

1640

I do support the intent of this legislation, and I do hope I will be able to enthusiastically vote along with my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus in support of this legislation when it comes forward.

I want to support the government's intention when it comes to the issue of how we treat students who have difficulty functioning in our regular classrooms. After all, that's what brings us to the issue of the Safe Schools Act to begin with. I was a member of the former government when we introduced the Safe Schools Act. I can tell you that what disappointed me at the time was that what the opposition parties, and specifically the Liberal caucus at the time—because I reviewed the Hansard record of the education critic's comments at the time the bill was brought in. They were not in the least bit allowing of the intent. There was very little, if any, goodwill in those remarks towards the government of the day in terms of our stated objective of wanting, first of all, to provide a safe environment within our schools; second, to provide the necessary supports to teachers, principals and administrators within our school system to be able to deal with the challenges of supervision, to be able to deal with the challenges of students who were creating problems within the school environment because of their behaviour; and the intent of providing alternative programs for those students who were unable to function within the normal classroom environment and for whom a very express provision was being made through that legislation and through the corollary announcements relating to alternative programs of the day.

Being what it was, that I will allow as having been the typical partisan bickering that goes on in this place. I want to take a different approach with the government. As the critic for education for our party, I want to say to the government that I will take you at your word in terms of your intent. I will also admit that the legislation as brought in by the previous government is in need of amendment, is in need of improvement. I have always said that any legislation is a work in progress; we in fact said that at the time. We said, "Look, this is a starting point for us. We will see how this legislation works on the ground. We'll see what the implementation experi-

ences are. And as there may be a requirement from time to time to make adjustments and changes and amendments to the legislation, we will look to the stakeholders, to the teachers, to principals, to parents. We'll seek advice from parent councils and the parent networks, and we'll see what needs to be done to improve the legislation so that we can in fact achieve the stated objective of that legislation." That was our intent.

It's very interesting to hear the Minister of Education and in fact the parliamentary assistant in their opening remarks. Those who were observing, watching the parliamentary channel, or those who have any interest to subsequently look at the Hansard record of those remarks may well detect the edge of partisanship with which those remarks were delivered, not allowing for any goodwill on the part of the evil previous government that brought this legislation in to punish kids and to bring in an era of zero tolerance, where anyone who had any issues or was creating problems would be thrown out in the streets and left as abandoned youth on our streets. That was the tone of what I heard the minister say, and that is what is so disappointing to me, because that was not the intent.

In fact, the experience across the province, even as admitted—it's interesting—by the minister and the parliamentary assistant, is that the experience under the Safe Schools Act was very different from one school board to another. There was a report released in 2005 by the then Minister of Education regarding the experiences across the province of school boards in suspensions and expulsions. It's very interesting that in that report it referred that, overall, 152,626 students were suspended in the previous year, or 7.2% of the entire student population. I say to the pages here, I know none of you were involved in that statistic—right?—because you wouldn't be pages. You are all extremely well behaved, and that's why you're here, and you're outstanding examples of what students should be. But the fact is, 7.2% of all students in Ontario were suspended.

Of those, 27,250, or 18%, were special-needs kids. These are young people, these are students in our education system, who have learning disabilities, who have problems with learning the same way that most kids learn. They either have learning disabilities, are kids with behavioural problems—we don't know what the issues are. There are children, there are students throughout our entire education system, in every community—and it doesn't matter if it's the city of Toronto or if it's the smallest town in rural Ontario. There are young people who, as a result, many times, of perhaps problems at home, perhaps family disruptions—it could be as a result of some of the learning disability issues that a lot of young people face today, whether it's ADD or other challenges that they might have that cause them not to be able to function within the classroom the same way. But of the suspensions, 27,000 were children with special needs. That's wrong.

I challenged the then Minister of Education during estimates committee on these numbers. I said to the

Minister of Education that something is fundamentally wrong in this province if students are being expelled because they are special-needs students and perhaps they're more difficult to deal with either in the classroom by the teacher or within the school by the principal, and rather than work with those children and those students, the easiest thing to do is simply give them a suspension notice and send them home. The problem is that many of those kids have nowhere to go. Mom and Dad are working, or there's a single mom, and all of a sudden there's a notice: "Your kid, who is having some trouble at school, isn't wanted here anymore and we're going to simply send them home."

That was never the intent of the Safe Schools Act. The intent of the Safe Schools Act was, yes, that you empower principals, and actually empower teachers as well, to suspend a student who was not complying with the behavioural standards and the disciplinary standards within the classroom, and for some reason they were not able to deal with them, so that we didn't disrupt an entire classroom because of the actions of one student. But the corollary of the Safe Schools Act as it was implemented was also that every school and every school board had the responsibility to put in place an alternative program for those students, so that if they couldn't learn within the normal setting, there was a place for them to go in an alternative program so that those students could get the necessary supports—that they would have the resources available within the school and within the school board—to come alongside those students and help them overcome whatever the challenges might be that they had, whether it was behavioural or learning; so that we could in fact not discard those students but help them integrate back into the educational system and back into the normal class as soon as possible, so that they'd have the tools with which they could become the best that they could be.

1650

The good news is that many school boards took that opportunity to access the funds that were made available at the time by the government of the day and developed the alternative programs. A good example of that is the York region board, where we have today—and they have been in place ever since this program was put in place—outstanding examples of alternative programs, classrooms outside of the normal setting, supported by teachers who have the special expertise and the gift to work with challenged students. We have wonderful results taking place with students, and that was all in the context of that Safe Schools Act.

That report indicated, for example, that in York region the suspension rate was 0.5% for the entire board. Toronto's suspension rate was 8.8%. Interestingly enough, the Superior-Greenstone area had a whopping suspension rate of 36.1%. Of their 2,901 students, 1,048 had been suspended in the previous year. Right across the province, you could take the various boards and the rate of suspensions that was being experienced in those boards and compare them. The question that begs to be

answered is: What was the difference, from one board, where students were being thrown out of the classroom at the rate of 36%, to those boards where it was only 0.5%? What was the difference? Was it the students? Were the students in one particular board or in half the boards that much worse in terms of their behaviour? I don't think so. What was it?

I've got a whole lot of confidence that it wasn't that at all. Whether it's rural Ontario or the inner city or wherever we are in the province of Ontario, I think our kids are pretty darned good. There may be challenges, depending on some of the social circumstances. There are some areas where we might have a higher concentration of single-family homes and where it's going to be a little more difficult for a parent—a single parent—to be there and provide some guidance to the kids, help students with homework and help them with some of the problems they're facing. There's no doubt that that is a factor. But at the end of the day, I believe that where the difference comes: in how the administration of a school and the administration of a board approached this whole issue of how we're going to apply the provisions of the Safe Schools Act, and whether we're going to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the government of the day to put in place alternative programs for schools. You see, here's the reality—and I was just speaking with some school board trustees last week about this whole issue. They admitted to me that at the time the government made available funding for alternative programs, their board chose not to take advantage of it because they didn't feel it was necessary to do so within their board. They now are saying, "We wish we would have done that because we would have created the budgetary framework within which to deliver those programs."

Here's the difference: There were boards where the vision was clear that not only was the Safe Schools Act a tool for discipline but it was also a mechanism and a framework to support students who were challenged and who had the need for additional support. The sad thing is that a lot of students fell through the cracks over the course of those years, and the need was there to go back and do the analysis, check on the performance of the school boards of the various schools to see how principals were applying the provisions of the act, to see what supports were available to those students who were having challenges, and, then, rather than allow students to fall by the wayside, to react quickly to that and make sure that the appropriate mechanisms were in place to protect those young people.

Here is what happened in 2003. In 2003 there was an election. In 2003, the government that brought in the Safe Schools Act, with all of those provisions and with the intention of the support of the alternative programs—that government was replaced by the current government. And it's interesting that the very members who now sit on the government side, during that entire election campaign, railed against the provisions of the Safe Schools Act and they committed that when they became the government they would fix it. That was three and a half

years ago. We are now 167 days away from the next election, and I say to the parliamentary assistant, I say to the Minister of Education and I say to the Premier, who refers to himself as the education Premier: Where have you been?

If in fact in 2005 we had the report, which I discussed with Minister Kennedy—this is three education ministers ago; the results were very obvious to us then, that something was askew in terms of how the Safe Schools Act was being applied—why no action over all of that time? In three and a half years, there have been many hundreds of thousands of students who have been ignored by this government. They agreed. They saw the numbers. Students were being expelled because they had special needs. Where was the action of the government three and a half years ago?

Now, 167 days before the next election, we have a photo op and we have an announcement, and we're in this place and we're having a problem finding enough legislative time to debate a bill so that it can actually be implemented.

1700

Shame on the government. Shame on the government for allowing what should have been a priority to go this long while they dithered and played around with other legislation such as—you'll remember it, Speaker; we debated it here—legislation to take drivers' licences away from kids because they're truant. We debated sushi legislation, we debated pitbull legislation—we debated all kinds of things in here—but students who had special needs and were being abused by the system, allowed to go astray, weren't important enough for the government to bring in legislation.

I want to speak to another aspect of this bill that I believe deserves attention, and that's the issue of bullying. Again, I want to commend the Minister of Education and the parliamentary assistant for recognizing once again that bullying is a serious problem. But here's the issue: I have here an announcement from the current government. The announcement goes back to 2004, and the announcement was that the government is going to stamp out bullying. That was three years ago. Interestingly enough, at that time we were dealing with a terrible tragedy, and it took that tragedy to get the attention of this government.

That tragedy related to 16-year-old Andrew Stewart. If you recall, we, along with his parents, mourned his tragic and violent death. His young life was lost defending a friend against a gang of thugs just steps from East York Collegiate, where Andrew was a student. The chilling aspect of that at the time was that parents came forward and said they had warned the school about the brewing violence weeks before. The parents said they wanted it to be known that they contacted the school to report incidents of bullying at the school, and, as one mother said at the time, "They have done nothing."

The purpose of raising this issue now, as it was then, is not to point a finger at any particular individual or at teachers or administrators; it is to point the finger at the

government of the day to say that we have now had successive announcements by this government about bullying and the fact that they're going to do something about it and put resources behind this issue, and the truth is that instead of getting better, it's getting worse. It's all about where the resources are being applied.

At the time—and I have the release here with me—the government was investing \$23 million. That \$23 million is an interesting figure. It keeps popping up. It was \$23 million that the parliamentary assistant referred to earlier with regard to this announcement. It must be in the word processor, and whenever you need one, "We've got another press conference; there's another announcement. Let's plug in the magic number: \$23 million." It sounds good; they must have researched that. Somehow it has an impact.

Well, \$23 million was announced back in 2004. They were going to have this incredible program to deal with this issue. I'm going to be asking a question during estimates committee. I'll be asking the minister to tell me where that money went, to show us some value for the dollars that have been invested. It will be very interesting for me and, I'm sure, for the public, to know where this money went and how it was spent.

We go on. That was December 2004. We move forward, then, to 2005. We have another announcement in November—interesting. November must be the month for the Minister of Education to come out with another bullying announcement. Here it is, November 16, 2005, "Stamping Out Bullying in Ontario Schools," another announcement by Mr. Kennedy. At the time, here's what he said: "Bullying is an underestimated and pervasive problem," said Kennedy. "It is a proven precursor to violent behaviour and is never acceptable in Ontario's schools or communities." Well, Mr. Kennedy, hello. You said that a year before.

Now we're three education ministers later, and guess what the current minister is telling us? "Bullying is a terrible thing. We have to stamp it out." Well, the Minister of Education's shoes must be worn very thin, because they've been stamping out bullying for the last three and a half years, it's worse than ever and we have gotten nowhere, except that the minister can stand in her place and condemn the previous government for the problems of today.

Notwithstanding the fact that we're 167 days away from the next election, this government, this Premier McGuinty, who calls himself the education Premier, has done nothing when it comes to the important issue of bullying, when it comes to the issue of safety in our schools and when it comes to the issue of discipline in the classrooms. We're right back to where we were—three and a half years of wasted time. I ask this Minister of Education: What is so different about what you're doing today compared to what you have done in the last three and a half years?

I want to now move to the issue of funding because, as I indicated earlier, we do have a problem with the minister's announcement. We support the objective. I want to

work with the minister, I want to work with the government to ensure that we get this right. When I pointed out on the day this announcement was made that, of the millions of dollars that were announced, not one cent was allocated to the alternative programs that are intended to support the students—

Mrs. Sandals: That's not true.

Mr. Klees: The parliamentary assistant is carping from her chair now, saying, "That's not true." Here is the announcement. Parliamentary Assistant, I would like you to listen very carefully, please, because perhaps you have not read this. I'll read it into the record because the people at home need to understand this.

Hear me clearly: The objective is to ensure that there are alternative programs so that students who cannot function in the existing normal classrooms have a place to go so that they get the necessary supports. That means you have to have the facility, you have to have the teachers who are specially trained for that and you have to have the appropriate resources.

Here is the list of announced funding: \$3 million for a three-year partnership with Kids Help Phone to provide more resources for bullying and cyber-bullying prevention support. That's nice. It's fine. I think the Kids Help Phone is a good idea. But there's \$3 million that has nothing to do with the support programs, the alternative programs that these kids are going to be transferred to when they're suspended under the terms of this legislation.

1710

The next item is "\$6 million for model projects to promote positive behaviour"; again, nice. I welcome that, but not one cent for the classroom, for the teacher, for the school board to provide on-the-ground support for that student who now is no longer in the normal classroom and is transferred into that alternative class.

There's "\$7.8 million for bullying prevention programs ... for schools and boards." Bullying prevention programs: That's nice too, but we're talking about the kids who are suspended who've already transitioned beyond the prevention part of this program. Where is the support for the program, for the classroom, for the alternative program that's going to take the young persons who've already been suspended under this act and give them the resources and the ability to deal their issues? Nothing.

We have "\$4.5 million for bullying prevention training for up to 25,000 teachers." Again, that's very nice. I was talking to a principal last week. He said, "Isn't that great? Now we've got another training program for teachers which is going to take teachers out of the classroom for the day of training or whatever period of time it's going to be. That leaves me, as a principal, with yet one more problem in terms of how to cover off for that teacher who has now been pulled out of the classroom for training." Again, this is very nice. I say to the members opposite that this is nice, but not one cent here is going to the classroom, to the alternative program to support the students who have the challenges.

There's "\$1.2 million for bullying prevention training for approximately 7,500 principals and vice-principals." Let's get serious. We're going to take vice-principals and principals and we're going to give them training on bullying prevention, and those same principals have the responsibility to deal with those young people who are already the product of bullying or are engaged in bullying, which is the very purpose of the Safe Schools Act: to be able to give some mechanism to deal with those young people. Again, under the Safe Schools Act a principal is required—not given an option—to suspend that student. It's mandatory—contrary to what the Minister of Education would have people believe, that there's now no mandatory suspension anymore. That's what they call zero tolerance.

On the one hand, they tell us that there is no more zero tolerance. That's not true. Folks, read the legislation. In fact, the same activities for which previously under the Safe Schools Act a principal was mandated, required to suspend a student, that same list of activities is in this legislation and the principal has no choice but to suspend that student.

Mrs. Sandals: You're not reading the act right. That's not what it says.

Mr. Klees: So I say to you that we have now given more training money to those principals and vice-principals, who I'm sure will be pleased to take another day out of their office and subject themselves to this wonderful training program that the government is going to provide to help them with this prevention strategy. But my point here is that we've gone through an entire list of funding and yet have we to come to one cent that's going to go into an alternative-program classroom.

I move through the list: "\$3.2 million for security access devices for schools as part of a safe welcome program to help staff better monitor school visitors and limit points of access" in schools. Again, this is very nice, and it's good. It actually relates to another announcement Mr. Kennedy made in 2005 about putting security devices in schools. That was going to be a major solution to the supervision and safety issues. Of course, we wonder where that money went: \$3.2 million for security access devices. That's good. Not one dollar for the classroom, not one dollar for the alternative program.

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don't believe there's a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

Mr. Klees: I was just on a roll. I can't believe this.

Mr. Chudleigh: Sorry, Frank.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges may continue.

Mr. Klees: Thank you, Speaker. For those who are watching the proceedings, that was one member of the Legislature asking the Speaker if there is a quorum in the

House so that we can continue to carry on business. It might be interesting for people to know that we have 103 members in the provincial Legislature. The number required to carry on business is 12. That means we didn't even have 12 members out of 103 in this place to allow us to continue to carry on business. But that's a subject for another time, and I'll carry on with my debate.

The final item, in terms of the list of funding that is being provided by the government, is \$3 million through the OESC special circumstances bullying and violence prevention fund for schools facing additional challenges. I don't know what that means, but I'll tell you what it doesn't mean; it's very obvious. It doesn't mean there is one cent for an alternative program for students who have been suspended and who need help. There's not one cent here for additional teachers; there is not one cent here for resources for new classrooms for alternative programs. And to my point, I say to the Minister of Education: You may be able to fool some of the people some of the time, but people who choose to inform themselves about the details of your announcement will not be fooled. You cannot fool the principals who have the responsibility to implement this; you cannot fool the teachers, who are on the front lines and have the responsibility to implement this program.

In short, as I've said before, we fully support the government's intention of providing supports for students who have challenges in their lives. It is fundamentally wrong that we simply suspend or expel students and leave them without the supports they need to deal whether it's with behavioural issues or whether it's with learning disability issues. We have a responsibility to provide those students with the support they need to transition back into that classroom and become the best they can possibly be, and we will support that. But it's our responsibility as the official opposition to challenge the government, to look beyond simply the rhetoric and make sure that when we have this legislation passed in its final form, it will meet the objectives as set.

1720

I am going to read into the record an explanatory note for the benefit of the viewers and for clarification of those stakeholders who perhaps still question and are confused about what is being said in this place about this bill today. The parliamentary assistant, from her seat, said to me that I am not reading the legislation correctly when I said that under this legislation principals are still required to suspend a student, that there is no discretion on the part of the principal for certain activities. I'm going to read this to the parliamentary assistant for her benefit: "If a pupil engages in an activity set out in new section 310, a principal must suspend the pupil for up to 20 days. The list of activities mirrors the list in old section 309." I'm going to close quotes there for just one minute.

For clarification and for the benefit of the parliamentary assistant and the Liberal members who have heard their minister say publicly that there is no zero tolerance in this bill, that zero tolerance has been eliminated by the

Liberal government, that they are much softer and gentler and kinder and this is the new era of the Safe Schools Act, this section of the bill, unless it's amended in committee, states very clearly that the list of activities for which a student had to be suspended under the previous Safe Schools Act is identical under this bill, and it continues to say that the principal must suspend those students.

I move forward and continue by quoting from the bill: "Following his or her suspension of a pupil under new section 310, the principal must promptly conduct an investigation, as required under new section 311.1, to determine whether to recommend to that board that the pupil be expelled." This is a new section of the bill and, frankly, I think it's good, except that I would propose an amendment that if there's going to be an investigation, perhaps the investigation should not be carried by the same principal who ordered the suspension in the first place. Perhaps there needs to be some objectivity introduced in the process here. That's a positive, well-intentioned suggestion that I put forward to the government.

I want to continue to read from the bill, because I don't want this to be my interpretation: "If the principal decides not to recommend expulsion after completing the investigation, he or she must confirm the suspension, reduce its length or withdraw it altogether. At that point, the suspension can be appealed to the board unless it was withdrawn."

Mrs. Sandals: Options; options.

Mr. Klees: The parliamentary assistant chirps from her seat, "Options." Yes, that is absolutely correct. The options only come in, Parliamentary Assistant, after the initial suspension is mandated. It is required. If that doesn't sound like zero tolerance to me, what does? So I say to you that I fully support the direction of this bill. We, as the official opposition, will support the intent of the bill, but please, let's keep the explanation of what you have truthful. Let's keep it truthful.

The Acting Speaker: I have to caution the member in implying that it's—in saying to "keep it truthful," you may be implying that it is not, so I would ask you to be very careful with your words. You should find some other wording for that.

Mr. Klees: I would never imply that someone is not truthful, especially this government. With the record this government has of making promises and not keeping them, I can't imagine that anyone in this province would ever even come close to accusing this government, or any member of this government, of being anything less than truthful. Now, they may have it wrong, they may have a wrong understanding, they may have an incorrect interpretation, but they could never be untruthful. So I thank you for the caution, Speaker.

I only have a few minutes left. I do want to speak to how important the issue of supervision is. This is directly related to the Safe Schools Act from the standpoint that I think every principal, every teacher, every administrator, every trustee and every parent will agree that it's one

thing to have a tool to deal with students who may be misbehaving, who may be a challenge because of their behaviour, but we need to ensure safety for those innocent bystanders, those students who are well behaved, who want to study and who come to that school or that classroom with the intention of giving it 100%. What about those students? How are we protecting those students, not only in the classroom but in the schoolyard? What is happening within our education system in this province today regarding that? What is this government doing or not doing to deal with that?

I want to read into the record a communication from the Ontario Principals' Council. This is a press release dated February 16 of this year. Here is what this release says, and I'm going to quote for the record:

"Over the past several years, the way supervision schedules are developed and implemented has changed. Increasingly, principals have lost the flexibility to ensure their students are appropriately supervised. Practices have been put in place that have led to concern and frustration for parents, students, teachers, support staff workers and principals.

"There has been a reduction in supervision, at both the elementary and secondary levels, creating a supervision gap that has not been adequately filled. That gap has negatively impacted student safety and the learning environment in our schools."

That is a direct quote from Blair Hilts, who is the president of the Ontario Principals' Council.

He goes on to say in this release, "There are no standards to deal with supervision during recess, lunchtime, transition between classes, before and after school, in hallways and in cafeterias." I wonder if parents know that.

They are calling on the government to endorse the standards that the Ontario Principals' Council has developed, and they're calling on the government to provide immediate and appropriate resources for implementation.

1730

How has this come about? How has this shortage in supervision come about in Ontario?

Here's the answer: In the last contract that was negotiated, virtually unilaterally, by the Minister of Education at the time, Gerard Kennedy, he agreed to a provision that reduces the number of supervision minutes that any teacher in the province must commit to the school during the course of a day. I don't have a problem with that. I don't have a problem with that at all, except for the fact that when the Minister of Education agreed to reduce the number of supervision minutes that a teacher has to commit, what he failed to do was, on the other side, provide the school board with the funding to make up for the supervision hours or minutes that were lost, that the teachers no longer were going to give. We warned the Minister of Education at the time that this was going to create a problem in our schools, in our hallways, in our cafeterias and in the schoolyards. We challenged the minister at the time: If you want to negotiate that pro-

vision into the teachers' contracts, fine. I'll support that. I'm sure that the teachers have every reason to need that additional time to carry out their particular functions in the classrooms and as teachers, whether it be preparation time or whatever that might be. This is not about challenging the teachers for what they requested of the Minister of Education. It is about the minister's irresponsibility in not making up the resources that the principals have lost, so that now the principals' council has to issue a press release and warn the government of the day that it is becoming dangerous in our schools and that they can no longer guarantee safety.

And so what the government is being asked to do is to understand that you can't, on the one hand, talk about safe schools and about bringing legislation in that's going to enhance safety in our schools and rail against bullying and cyber-bullying and all of these things, and on the other hand not provide the resources to principals to even properly supervise our classrooms and our cafeterias and the hallways in our schools. It's fundamental. It's very simple. It's a matter of stepping up to the plate and having your actions keep up with your words. If you don't want to be accused of having merely empty rhetoric, then put some substance to your intention.

On behalf of principals across this province and on behalf of teachers, who are under the stress of this circumstance as well—because well-meaning teachers, and all of them are, are now caught in this tension of knowing that kids need to be supervised, knowing that whether it's getting kids on the bus, whether it's having kids in cafeterias or whether it's in the hallways or the classrooms, if they are not there and nobody's there, it's an unsafe environment. On behalf of those people, on behalf of students, on behalf of parents, I appeal to the government: Step up to the plate and provide the necessary resources.

And finally, I want to challenge the Minister of Education, as I have done many times in this Legislature. I ask her once again to look to programs that are already in place in this province to help schools with the issue of bullying. I ask her once again to revisit the Lions Quest program, which is so successful in schools across the country and internationally. This is a program that has been developed by the Lions Clubs International. It is staffed and supported by volunteers who care about our kids and who know that there's a need to provide a helping hand, resources and supports on this important issue of bullying and character development. For some reason, the Minister of Education of this province, of this government, refuses to meet with the Lions Clubs International to talk about how that program can be incorporated into our schools and have a very positive impact across this province. Instead, we hear announcement after announcement, millions and millions of dollars thrown at training programs helter-skelter. We have people across our province who are willing to come forward, offer their help, and we shut the door. We don't even give them the benefit of a meeting with the minister.

I call on the minister to work with us to improve the legislation. I've committed our support to the minister, to

the parliamentary assistant, to the government to help them achieve the stated objective as it was announced when they made the announcement of this legislation. I look forward to committee, when we can bring forward our constructive amendments to help us achieve that.

Again, I want to thank the safe schools action team for their work. I know it was not an easy task. They travelled the province, spoke with many stakeholders. We look forward to their work having a positive impact in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Since I'm speaking next, I just have a simple question for the member for Oak Ridges.

It's clear that the Durham board had a better record than most other boards. It's clear they offered alternative programs in the Durham board and expelled fewer students and suspended fewer students. That was a good thing.

I just wondered whether the member for Oak Ridges ever had a discussion with the former Premiers about that and whether or not he might have told the former Premiers, "Look, we have to change the direction. We have to get these other boards to do what we're doing in Durham, because what we're doing in Durham is working." I'm curious about how that might have happened, because I know that the Conservative members are really very effective, more progressive in opposition. But I'm curious about what he might have said to the former Premiers.

Mrs. Sandals: So much to say and only two minutes to say it in. First of all, I'd like to thank the member for Oak Ridges for reading into the record page 2 of our press release, which does a wonderful job of explaining how we have already, currently, spent \$28.7 million on a number of things, including training on bullying for principals. In fact, the research shows that in many cases principals don't understand how to intervene in issues of bullying, and we're not currently doing it, which of course is why we are changing things.

If the member would like to go back to page 1 of the press release, he will find that on page 1 there is an allocation of \$31 million of new money, and of that, \$23 million is going to programming for alternative programs specifically.

I do need to comment on the availability under the previous government of money made available for alternative programs, because in fact there was money made available—for 12 classrooms in the entire province to serve all troubled students. Some of those 12 classrooms—I've visited a number of them—were excellent programs. The trouble was that in many parts of the province you had to drive three or four hours to get to the nearest alternative classroom. So in fact that's why lots of kids got expelled and never went to an alternative program: They weren't there.

1740

It is true that some boards, like York region, have done an excellent job. A number of the GTA boards have

actually developed their own alternative programs and have found money within their own budget, not from the Tory government, to fund those.

With respect to what the legislation actually says, we'll do that in another two-minute round.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I certainly appreciated the thorough work that the member from Oak Ridges did in his comments.

There are a couple of points I would like to simply draw your attention to. One of them is the question of the link between safe schools and appropriate supervision. Obviously there is a direct link not only with the issue of supervision but also the question of resources.

The member made reference to the Lions Quest program. I have to say that I personally think that it's a huge opportunity that should be provided for in the province, because this is something that has been tested. It has been extremely well received, and it deals with an area of leadership that very often is forgotten in the scheme of the crowded curriculum that we have.

The other area that I would just comment on very quickly, and again one that operates in a very efficient manner, is the FAST program, Families and Schools Together. While the ministry and the minister talk about the need to have all of these anti-bullying training sessions and things like that, there are programs like FAST which deal with the issues before they emerge as those serious issues. I think the government should also be looking at those kinds of programs that do so much for individual students and their families.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): It's a pleasure to be able to respond to the different members. In fact, I participated on that particular Safe School Task Force, under the previous government, as president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. I can assure you that in no way was there ever any consideration for the student. What there was consideration for was the process: Get them out and get them on the street, because there were no dollars for programs. In fact, the money that was taken out of the school system was extraordinary—not money put into; "decimated" is a word that really comes to mind. The student was never uppermost in the mind of the previous government, and neither were the teachers, who are in fact the pivotal people who make a difference in the life of a child. You need to put in intervention, you need to put in support systems, and that's what this did.

What did happen was a semi-judicial process that clogged the school boards in what they could do with these students and restricted the time that they could do anything around any type of remedial program. It was not ever considered a part of that Safe School Task Force. The only thing they wanted to do was get those kids and get them out, because they didn't deserve to be in school.

Interjection: Answer Rosie's question.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Oak Ridges has two minutes for a response.

Mr. Klees: The Minister of Transportation disapproves me because she ascribes a motive to the previ-

ous government that simply is not factual. I can tell that she's revving up for an election.

I say to people who have observed this debate that you have heard our positioning as the official opposition. We want to work with the government of the day to ensure that this bill is implemented and that we go beyond the rhetoric, that we put in place the necessary supports for students who need help so that they can in fact become the best they can be.

In response for the question put to me by the member for Trinity—Spadina, I can confirm for him, as will the two former Premiers, that there were many occasions when I chose to challenge the directions that were taken by the previous government on a number of issues. The member will also recall that there was a time when I resigned from cabinet. The reason for that will never be known other than between myself and the former Premier. But I need no one to tell me that I should be standing for the right thing to do, because that's why I'm elected, that's why I serve in public office, and I will never compromise that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I'm happy to speak to Bill 212. I want to give a little bit of history from my perspective of having been here for a while. I want to say that when the Conservatives brought in this bill—I think it was enacted in 2001 or 2002—it was called “zero tolerance” for a reason. I agree with the Minister of Transportation. The effect of the bill was to get students out of the system. It in effect gave a licence to principals and teachers to suspend and to expel. That's what the bill did. It was supposed to be under a culture of a law-and-order government, and a law-and-order government would simply not tolerate bad behaviour in our schools. If they misbehaved, they had to be out.

We attacked them. The Liberals attacked them. Monsieur Kennedy, mon ami, attacked them. He's now gone. God bless. We were strong, in opposition, in saying, “That needs to change.” I didn't waver in my desire to deal with the bill, to in fact say, “It's got to go.” I think the Liberals wavered a little bit in that regard. I'll get to that in a moment.

There was no doubt what the intent of the zero tolerance policy was by Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, former Premiers of the Conservative Party. It had an incredibly detrimental effect on students. Teachers—to be fair to them—who deal with a lot of problems in the educational system, for some of them, when they couldn't cope, the best way to deal with it was to suspend them, let them go. Principals coping with greater workloads decided that the better way to deal with suspensions and expulsions was to let them go, because when you have a big workload and you just can't cope with so many things, you sometimes find the easy way out. There may be former principals who are now MPPs who say that's not true.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): It's not true.

Mr. Marchese: The Minister of Mines can stand up and give his two minutes and tell us how it is. When you

look at the numbers, Minister of Mines, of the old days, including your days in government, when you look at the huge number of suspensions, you have to tell me what happened there. What happened that so many students were suspended and expelled? What new reality were you and your former colleagues dealing with, Minister? I put it to you that when you are under severe stress as a principal, dealing with so many demands on your time, and you're given a zero tolerance bill, did some of you—

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: Now you're changing—

Mr. Marchese: Now you're changing, are you? Did some of you decide—

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: You're changing the message, Rosie.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, really? Well, listen, two of you have two minutes, and the two of you who are former principals and another minister who was a former teacher can stand up and tell me what it really was like while you were here and outside of here. I'm looking forward to it.

So I attack the old zero tolerance policies of the Conservative government, as I attack the Liberal regime when they came into office and for four years they did little, or absolutely nothing at all, to deal with the bill.

1750

Minister of Mines, Minister of Culture, I put it to you: The Liberal government had a report from the Human Rights Commissioner, who did a number of studies and said to you, Liberal government members and ministers, that through the zero tolerance policy left to you by the Conservative regime and maintained by the Liberal regime, thousands and thousands of students who were black or students of colour were being disproportionately expelled and suspended in great numbers. You knew that. The commissioner told you that. The commissioner also told you that a high number and a disproportionate number of students who have a disability were being suspended and expelled. And while the Minister of Transportation said that the zero tolerance policy of the Tory government was to get students out, you knew that was the purpose of that zero tolerance policy, yet you maintained the same regime for years and years. Why would you do that?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: It's only been three.

Mr. Marchese: The Minister of Transportation says that it's only been three. Surely three years is not a lot. If it was okay for the Tories to suspend and expel students in great numbers from 2001 to 2003 and the Liberal regime expelled and suspended students from 2003 to 2006—she says, “It's only three.” You've been expelling more students in three years under your regime than the Tories did under theirs. Please, three years is plenty.

When you have the facts presented by the Human Rights Commissioner in front of you that say, “Look, you are discriminating against students with a disability and you're discriminating against students who come from a background of colour,” you smile and you laugh and you say, “Ha, but we put some money in. We really care because we're Liberals. We started training. And, yes, it takes time. Yes, there was discrimination under the

Tories, but under the Liberals, it just takes a little time. But we're nicer. We will produce a different result. Yes, discrimination must continue to exist, but please allow us the time to deal with it. Allow us the time to have a safe school action team," which the parliamentary assistant and the Minister of Transportation are so proud of.

Do you know what this team did? With all due respect—nothing to do with the team—it's all about the minister literally avoiding for four years dealing with the issue of discrimination against students with disabilities and students of colour. She creates a safe school action team. This is what she said in her report. She asked the team to look at various things because, lo and behold, she said that there was a lack of consistency on how the Safe Schools Act was being applied. How could the act be anything but inconsistent? I knew that. The Minister of Transportation, a former chair of the Toronto board, knew that. The parliamentary assistant, a long-time trustee, knew that. Did we need a study to prove to us that there are inconsistencies in the application of the zero tolerance Safe Schools Act? What's that about? Why, minister of mines, are we paying people to tell us what we already know? And Minister of Culture, are we acting on this side of the House, do you think? Do you think anything we're saying makes any sense to you? Nod if you think so.

The safe schools action team reviewed the issue of fairness, and the minister says, and all the other Liberals, that some groups were seen to be more likely to be suspended or expelled than others. Oh, really? You didn't know that the Human Rights Commissioner told you that years ago in his studies? You say that some groups were seen to be more likely to be suspended. "A number of concerns were raised that the legislation and related school board discipline policies were having a disproportionate impact on racial minorities and disabled students." Oh, really? Did you not hear what the Human Rights Commissioner told you years prior to your setting

up this committee to review this? And you have to go and consult, high and low, far and wide, paying people to tell you what the Human Rights Commissioner had already told you?

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Member from Brant, Monsieur Levac, mon ami, s'il te plaît, for years I told you that what we needed was discretion instead of zero tolerance. For years we told you that you need mandatory—

Mr. Levac: Who said?

Mr. Marchese: Marchese told you. The NDP told you.

Mr. Levac: Who else?

Mr. Marchese: Who else told you? You needed the Tories to tell you that?

Mr. Levac: No.

Mr. Marchese: So who are you waiting for? For others to tell you that's what you should do?

For years we were saying to them, the bad ones, and you Liberal good ones, please bring in discretion instead of zero tolerance, bring in mandatory alternatives for suspended and expelled students, restore the community advisers and youth outreach workers—and I'll get to that—and you needed somebody else to tell you that? It wasn't enough for you? The Human Rights Commissioner told you, "You're discriminating," and that wasn't enough for you? What did you need? Oh, you needed to set up a safe schools action team. I can't believe it.

Let me go on, Speaker, for your benefit. Are we running out of time, Speaker? But we'll be back tomorrow afternoon. Those who are watching this political channel can tune in around 3:30, 3:45, and we'll have plenty more time for me to continue with this debate.

The Speaker: The time now being 6 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 25 April 2007

Mercredi 25 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 April 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 SUR LES ESPÈCES EN VOIE DE DISPARITION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 17, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts / Projet de loi 184, Loi visant à protéger les espèces en péril et à apporter des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 23, 2007, I am now required to put the question.

On March 28, Mr. Ramsay moved second reading of Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1846 to 1856.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight

Ferreira, Paul
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Horwath, Andrea
Kormos, Peter
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marchese, Rosario
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
Miller, Norm
Mitchell, Carol

Mossop, Jennifer F.
Munro, Julia
Oraziotti, David
Peters, Steve
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Martiniuk, Gerry

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 39; the nays are 1.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 avril 2007

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 23, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on general government.

SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act / Projet de loi 198, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario afin d'assurer la sauvegarde et la durabilité des eaux de l'Ontario, à apporter des modifications connexes à la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l'eau potable et à abroger la Loi sur le contrôle des transferts d'eau.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 24, 2007, I'm now required to put the question.

On April 12, 2007, Ms. Broten moved second reading of Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1900 to 1910.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Ferreira, Paul

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Horwath, Andrea
Kormos, Peter
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marchese, Rosario
Marsales, Judy
Martiniuk, Gerry
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
Miller, Norm
Mitchell, Carol

Mossop, Jennifer F.
Munro, Julia
Oraziotti, David
Peters, Steve
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 41; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 24, 2007, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

REGULATORY
MODERNIZATION ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION

Mr. Peters moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts /
Projet de loi 69, Loi permettant l'échange de renseignements sur les organismes réglementés afin de rendre plus efficaces l'application et l'exécution de la législation de nature réglementaire et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Welcome, everyone, to the Legislature this evening. I take this opportunity to move this chair out of the way and, just to start, to say thank you to some people, because often we lose sight of the individuals who work so hard behind the scenes to make sure that we develop good legislation, we consult, we take legislation to committee and then we bring it back to this House.

First, I'd like to recognize the Inspection, Investigation and Enforcement Secretariat within the Ministry of Labour. Particularly, I want to thank assistant deputy minister John Stager and his dedicated and hard-working staff. As well, the Regulatory Modernization Act drafting team from the Ministry of Labour, but as well the staff in a number of other ministries: the legal policy and operational staff from the 13 regulatory ministries and legal representatives from the Ministry of the Attorney General. As well, there are a number of individuals within my ministerial staff whom I'd like to thank. I had to promise them this evening that I wouldn't mention their names, but they know who they are and I do thank them very much.

I am honoured to be here tonight to initiate third reading debate on the proposed Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006. I'm very proud that the proposed legislation would, if passed, improve the way the government deals with Ontario's businesses and assists them in improving compliance capabilities. And I'm proud that this bill, if passed, would enable the province's 13 regulatory ministries and their associated delegated administrative authorities and agencies to share information more effectively and work better together. Through improved communication and co-operation, we would better be able to protect the public and more effectively help businesses meet their regulatory obligations. Improved communication would mean less duplication in compliance activities and targeting enforcement efforts where they count.

It is with our stakeholders' help that we've been able to create this balanced piece of legislation. The business community and our own field staff have helped identify opportunities for greater co-operation and information sharing in the area of regulatory compliance. It is clear that we need to modernize the way we share information and work together within government if we want to provide the level of protection that Ontarians expect and deserve.

Our proposed Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006—and I think from this point forward I'm going to call it the RMA—is an integral part of this modernization process. The proposed act has the following key components and would, if passed, allow the collection, use and sharing of compliance information across all regulatory ministries.

It would give field staff the authority to provide other ministries with a heads-up if they observe something during a site visit that may be relevant to the mandate of another ministry, and it would authorize ministers to create special teams of field staff to work together.

It would authorize ministers to publish compliance-related information under designated legislation in order to better inform the public and to act as a deterrent for non-compliance.

It would authorize prosecutors to request that a court consider relevant prior convictions under any provincial law in the sentencing of a defendant; for example, a corporation, director, officer or owner. It would require the court to provide reasons when it decides that a previous conviction raised by a prosecutor does not justify a more severe penalty.

This bill is about government being better able to help businesses meet their regulatory obligations. It's about more effectively protecting the public interest. It's about ministries communicating and co-operating more effectively. It's about reducing compliance activities.

One of the things that has certainly struck me since we've taken office is that many times, using an agricultural analogy, we work in silos within government. This bill gives us the opportunity to get out of that silo mentality and better work in a more co-operative manner interministerially. And I'm proud of that.

We met with many stakeholders in the development of this act: businesses, associations and various government ministry staff. We talked to representatives from both municipal and federal governments. We met with a number of business associations and with dozens of small business owners. They all expressed a common need: that government needed to reduce duplication, whether it's how information is collected or in the coordination of our inspections. Our own staff, especially those individuals who are out in the field week after week inspecting facilities, spoke of the importance of being able to work together and to share information. They want the tools to be able to co-operate with their colleagues in other ministries to ensure organizations are complying with Ontario laws and to ensure that communities across Ontario are safe and healthy.

Almost every stakeholder told us how important it is for us to target the businesses that seek an unfair competitive advantage by constantly and consistently breaking Ontario laws.

We also consulted, very importantly, with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I personally spoke with the commissioner, and she is comfortable with the approach we are taking with this bill.

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By and large, our stakeholders support what we are trying to do, and we have worked and will continue to work with our stakeholders to make this bill a solid and progressive piece of legislation.

At the end of March, in the standing committee on general government, we heard some of our business stakeholders and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. They had questions about the bill. They also underscored some of the important benefits they see in the bill, should it pass. OPSEU said they believe that this bill will help its members, its field staff in the work that they do.

I'll take this opportunity to thank Leah Casselman for her service as president of OPSEU for well over 10 years. We thank Leah for her commitment and we wish Leah all the best in her future endeavours. I'll take this opportunity to welcome the newly elected president, Smokey Thomas. We wish Mr. Thomas well in his endeavour as the new president of OPSEU.

But Leah in her role as president of OPSEU spoke about the importance of the bill, the very thing I just spoke about: breaking down silos of information within government. In their written submission to the committee, Parkdale Community Legal Services, a provider of legal advice and representation to low-income communities in Toronto's west end, urged the committee to move forward with the bill in order for government agencies to better protect low-income, marginalized groups that the clinic represents.

I'd now like to highlight some of the individual components of our proposed bill.

(1) Information sharing:

The act would, if passed, change the way regulatory ministries and other regulators could collect, use and share information obtained through their inspections and other compliance-related activities. Currently, the general approach is that ministries work independently of each other. They undertake separate compliance-related activities from their respective statutes. There are obstacles, including legislative restrictions, which limit or restrict how information can be shared amongst other ministries.

I've spoken to many business owners and members of the public who are surprised at these restrictions. They ask, "How can government be efficient if government ministries cannot talk to one another?" This means that our own compliance activities often operate in those ministerial silos that I described. To be more effective and to provide the level of protection expected by Ontarians, ministries need to be able to communicate and co-operate more effectively.

For example, small businesses in Ontario may be regulated by a number of provincial ministries. This means that small businesses may be asked to submit similar types of information, such as the company name, address and business activities, to several different ministries. Business owners are using up valuable time submitting duplicate information to different ministries, time that could be better spent on actual business. The information sharing tools in the bill would help ministries better coordinate how information is collected from organizations.

We believe that this bill, if passed, would also help us gain a better understanding of the organizations that commit serious repeat violations of Ontario laws. All businesses, small, medium and large, have made it clear that government needs to deal with this small but significant element of the regulated community in order to ensure a level playing field for the business community and in order to ensure a higher level of public protection. The information sharing provision would mean that ministries could better work together to conduct targeted activities to address these organizations that repeatedly break the laws of Ontario.

We've also heard from stakeholders that government must be prudent and vigilant in managing the information we collect. This is why we've included several safeguards in the bill.

First, I'd like to point out that the proposed legislation would not—I repeat, would not—if passed, expand upon the types of information that can be currently collected from businesses.

Second, prior to any information being collected, used and shared among ministries, the legislation under which the information is collected must be designated by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Third, any person who shares this information must be authorized by the minister responsible for that legislation, or his or her delegate, prior to undertaking any information-sharing activity. I reiterate: We have worked closely with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and they are comfortable with this approach that we are taking.

(2) The heads-up authority:

This legislation would provide field staff with clear statutory authority to give a heads-up to colleagues in other ministries. For example, a Ministry of the Environment inspector might be in a workplace and notice someone cutting metal without safety goggles. The inspector would be able to give the Ministry of Labour a heads-up about this potentially unsafe workplace situation. The key here is that staff can help one another when it comes to making observations that might be relevant to the administration of, and compliance with, another statute.

This legislation is not about fishing expeditions. Field staff would be limited to recording and disclosing to another ministry information that they observe. Field staff making observations would not have the authority to change hats and start conducting inspections on behalf of another ministry. We recognize and we respect the level

of expertise and technical capability of each member of our compliance staff and what they bring to the administration and enforcement of legislation. The heads-up authority would facilitate the government working in co-operation. That's why we are providing our inspectors with the tools they need to do their jobs more effectively.

(3) Special teams through multiple authorizations:

A large part of our regulatory modernization effort is to make better, more efficient use of our high-quality existing resource. That high-quality existing resource is our people, a public service that we're proud of, a public service that is committed to looking after the welfare of the citizens of Ontario.

This legislation would provide ministers with the authority to create teams made up of inspectors from their ministries to carry out special compliance projects. For example, inspectors from the ministries of environment, transportation, and labour might work together on a special compliance project, perhaps to find out how they can work together to assist small business owners, such as auto body repair shops, to understand, manage and comply with provincial legislation, or perhaps to do joint inspection sweeps of facilities in a specific sector that repeatedly disregard environmental, transportation and occupational health and safety laws.

I think this is important to stress, because we heard this at committee and during our consultation. This bill is not about, and they have no intention of creating, super-inspectors or super-inspectorates with this proposed legislation. We recognize that super-inspectors would not be a feasible option, because we recognize that ministry inspectors within those 13 ministries deal with complex and technical issues of inspection and enforcement. This is specific work to specific ministry staff.

We have therefore included safeguards in this section of the bill. Where a special compliance project team is set up, relevant ministers would be required to set out in writing specific limitations, including the types of information to be collected by the team and the purposes for which the information would be shared, as defined in the bill. The written authorizations would also have to specify clearly the powers and duties to be exercised by the team, members under each authorized statute, and the time period during which these powers would be exercised.

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(4) The publication of compliance information:

The bill provides the ability to publish compliance-and conviction-related information about organizations and conviction information about individuals under designated statutes. Again, we've heard concerns from compliant businesses that government needs to do more to address companies that commit serious, repeat violations of Ontario's laws. By identifying companies that repeatedly contravene Ontario's laws, we believe this would act as a deterrent for repeat offenders and better help to keep the public and employees safe. Companies should, and we trust do, value their reputation within their communities. Greater transparency and published information

about regulatory contraventions can be a motivating factor in companies achieving compliance with our laws.

We also know that there are some situations where publishing this information is a matter of public safety. For example, in the past, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs issued news releases about actions it was taking in response to information received regarding activities at meat-processing plants. We need this kind of practice to be consistent across all ministries. And let me reinforce that the publication of any information about individuals would be in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or other clear statutory rules.

Again, we consulted with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We also heard the business community's concerns about the publication of complaints. If the bill passes, our government will ensure fairness for individual businesses and the business community as a whole in the publication of information about complaints. This is a responsibility we take very seriously.

This is one of the reasons why we've voted to amend—again, I repeat, we voted to amend—the bill at standing committee, so that it comes into force eight months after royal assent. This will give us the time required to prepare guidelines that would facilitate responsible and consistent publication practices across those regulatory ministries. In developing these guidelines, we will work with our stakeholders, including the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

(5) Sentencing considerations:

Where a company repeatedly disregards the laws, the bill, if passed, would allow a prosecutor to ask a court to consider previous convictions under any act when sentencing an offender convicted of an offence under a regulatory law. By authorizing the prosecutor to ask the courts to consider a defendant's previous convictions, we hope that the sentences imposed on repeat offenders will reflect their repeated contraventions of Ontario's laws. In other words, the greater the number of prior convictions in a defendant's record, then potentially the more severe the penalty—for example, a higher fine. This could be imposed by our courts.

Allow me to give you an example. An unlicensed home renovator might have a history of convictions under multiple statutes, for example, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Environmental Protection Act and the Consumer Protection Act. If the renovator were found guilty of an additional regulatory offence, the proposed act would authorize prosecutors in their sentencing submissions—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 23(b), I would ask the Speaker to please direct the member to make sure his comments speak directly to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, standing order 23 does require that and we'll all listen very carefully to that point.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I appreciate the interjection from the honourable member. It gave me a opportunity to have

a drink of water. I would hope, in bringing this forward, that the honourable member would recognize that what I'm trying to do is to show examples as to how this bill, if passed, could work. I think perhaps the honourable member is a little surprised that we're dealing with many of the issues that he expressed concern about.

Again, I'll repeat, if the renovator were found guilty of an additional regulatory offence, the proposed act, if passed, would authorize prosecutors in their sentencing submissions to present this unlicensed home renovator's record of convictions under other statutes. This could then lead to the imposition of a more severe penalty by the court. If the court were not to impose the more severe penalty, the proposed act would require the court to provide written reasons for its decision.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Peters: If you're so interested, we could ask for unanimous support right now and just pass this bill.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Peters: All of these components of the proposed legislation are just part of our broader modernization agenda.

Mr. Kormos: Steve, say hello to members of the scouting movement.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Welcome. I'd shake your hand with the left hand. You're not supposed to wave back at me, but welcome here, and I hope that this will ensure that you receive a badge. We thank you and your leaders for what you do. The scouting movement is a great opportunity, and so are Girl Guides. By the way, if you're ever buying Girl Guide cookies, my niece is on the box twice—Olivia Peters. So make sure you buy some Girl Guide cookies and support my niece, Olivia. But welcome to the House this evening.

Mr. Kormos: I just want to assure you that I'm a left-winger.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I'm a centre man—that's the Liberal approach.

The Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006, is a fundamental part of a broader regulatory compliance modernization agenda that represents a balanced approach to compliance. The broader agenda includes performance-based strategies to recognize companies with outstanding records and compliance and to target enforcement efforts toward those companies that are serious repeat violators. We're working on developing strategies that would publicly recognize companies with exceptional records of compliance and companies that perform in a highly responsible manner. By recognizing excellence, we hope to encourage other organizations to model themselves after these leaders and to take action to achieve higher levels of compliance. In turn, with more companies taking their compliance responsibilities seriously, we can use our enforcement effort to focus on those organizations that repeatedly violate and seriously do not obey Ontario laws.

We are responding to what businesses have told us. It is important for us to target the businesses that seek an unfair competitive advantage by consistently breaking

Ontario laws. This might mean doing target inspections of that small portion of the regulated community that commits repeat serious violations of Ontario laws. The proposed Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006, is a great example of how the McGuinty government is committed to improving the way government works. The proposed legislation is also an excellent example of how the McGuinty government is on the side of small businesses and entrepreneurs.

We have met and listened to dozens of small business owners and associations in Ontario. They have told us that for them to grow and prosper, we need to reduce duplication in compliance activities and better help businesses meet the regulatory compliance obligations. There are 13 provincial ministries and their associated delegated administrative authorities and agencies responsible for compliance activities. Many small businesses we've spoken to, such as auto body shops, are regulated by as many as seven or eight different ministries.

These small businesses and their owners don't necessarily have issues with regulation. They know that regulation is necessary to ensure responsible operation; for example, to ensure that the health and safety of their staff and of the public is protected. But these businesses do want us to know and understand the challenges that they face. They have told us that they provide some of the same types of information over and over again to various government officials. Some auto body shop owners may be required to complete around 70 different forms that pertain to their businesses.

The bill proposed would help reduce duplication in compliance activities and would benefit the Ontario business community, including small business owners. By reducing duplication, we'd be better able to target enforcement activities to where they count: towards businesses that commit serious repeat violations. The business community has clearly underscored the importance of that last point.

Small businesses are put at a competitive disadvantage by organizations that break Ontario laws—for example, shadow organizations that set up operations, operate illegally, close their doors and then set up shop again under a new name. The bill, if passed, would help ministries work together to better address non-compliant organizations, but more importantly, create a level playing field for responsible organizations.

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Small business owners have also told us that they have trouble keeping up. They want to follow the law. They want to understand the regulatory obligations. In response, we have begun an extensive modernization process designed to help small businesses in their efforts to comply with our laws. In addition to Bill 69, our government has introduced a new approach to help small businesses meet their regulatory requirements.

One year ago, Premier McGuinty announced the creation of a separate ministry for small business called the Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. I discussed with Minister Takhar ways that we can better

assist small businesses in complying with the laws of Ontario. I've also spoken at the Small Business Agency of Ontario. My parliamentary assistant has spoken as well to the Small Business Agency of Ontario on initiatives the Ministry of Labour has undertaken to assist small businesses. My parliamentary assistant, Mario Racco, the member for Thornhill, sits on the Small Business Agency of Ontario and keeps me updated on their discussions.

Last summer we launched an easy-to-understand online tool kit for the auto body repair sector. The Auto Body Repair Compliance Information Centre helps auto body shops find information from across ministries that they need to be in compliance. We have received rave reviews from the auto body industry as a result of our efforts. One review said, "Having one place to go for compliance questions will save a lot of time for shop owners. It's a big step forward to be able to quickly access the information we need to run compliant businesses."

We've also expanded the successful initiative to manufacturers of plastic products, and we'll be launching an online compliance information centre for them this spring.

Let me again emphasize that the proposed Regulatory Modernization Act is a critical part to the continuing success of these projects. This act, if passed, would enable inter-ministerial collaboration on projects similar to these. We want to improve and expand on these pilot projects because the McGuinty government is on the side of small businesses and entrepreneurs, and we are committed to supporting them whenever possible.

We are removing the challenges to doing business. This can only help to contribute to a successful, vibrant economy. The bottom line is that the bill makes sense. It makes sense for Ontario businesses, it makes sense for Ontario regulators and it makes sense for Ontarians.

We consulted with many stakeholders. The small business community and employees of the Ontario public service contributed significantly to helping us find areas of improvement. They gave us suggestions on how ministries could share information and better work together. I want to thank them for their ideas.

If we truly want to move forward, help businesses and increase opportunities for ministries to work together, we need this bill to pass. We want to strengthen the government's ability to provide excellent service to Ontario businesses, the public of Ontario, and to work in modern ways. We want our businesses to know and understand their regulatory obligations. We want to find solutions that are good for business, solutions that are good for working people and, above all, solutions that are good for everyone in Ontario.

The McGuinty government's modernization initiatives will help build a strong and prosperous economy, better protect the public interest and provide Ontarians with the best quality of life, second to none.

I'd like to now conclude. To summarize, we believe the proposed Regulatory Modernization Act is a strong and balanced bill. The act is vital to our broader efforts to

modernize Ontario's regulatory activities so that there is more co-operation among ministries and agencies to help businesses meet their regulatory requirements, less duplication in compliance activity for businesses and their organizations, and better protection of public interest. And we are confident that Ontario's business community will appreciate the benefits of our modernization agenda as we move forward. Our approach is good for business, it's good for government and, most importantly, it's good for the people of Ontario.

To our Scouts who are up there right now, I will just close with this, and I trust my colleagues will allow me to indulge in it: One of the things that we can all do in a very non-partisan way in this House is to promote young worker health and safety. These young individuals who are here in the audience today are our future, and we need to do our part to help make sure that if we plant that seed in those young people now, it's something they're going to carry forward with them for the rest of their lives.

As the Minister of Labour, I say to each of you up there right now that when you get into that position and you have your first job, remember that the Occupational Health and Safety Act is there to protect you. Do not ever allow somebody to put you in an unsafe work position. You have the right to say no. Each and every one of us in this assembly tonight, from all three parties, needs to do our part to promote the importance of young worker health and safety.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity and I trust that we'll see speedy passage of the Regulatory Modernization Act.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): As we talk about labour law in Ontario, I think the thing I've learned over the period of time I've been in this House is the interest in the word "balance." Certainly there have been companies in Ontario that would take advantage of labour, and there is labour in this country that would take advantage of management. To strike that balance between how labour is treated by management and how management is treated by labour is what is going to make the Ontario economy, Ontario manufacturers and Ontario business successful.

Of course, in the last three years we've seen what amounts to probably the decimation of a lot of manufacturing in Ontario. This hasn't been brought about at the hands of labour, it hasn't been brought about at the hands of management; it's been brought about by the circumstances in which business in Ontario finds itself today. Those circumstances to some degree are the responsibility of this government. This government hasn't had the balance that is required between government, management and labour in order to create the atmosphere for the manufacturing of products in Ontario to compete with places around the world. That's too bad, because 15% of the manufacturing industry has disappeared in Ontario and it's extremely difficult to get back. It took years and years to develop that manufacturing base, and

to see it decimated in the way it's been decimated in the last three years is a sad commentary on this government's initiatives.

Mr. Kormos: I want to comment on that portion of the minister's speech that made reference to the Scouts in the gallery, because of course we join him in welcoming these young people here to Queen's Park. This is their building as much as it is any other Ontarians'. It's good to see these folks in the visitors' gallery.

I ran into them in the hallway before the 6:45 session started and I apologized. I indicated to them that tonight's debate may not be quite as exciting as we would wish in the context of having a live audience like these young people, notwithstanding that Mr. Martiniuk, the member for Cambridge, will be speaking for an hour on Bill 69, he being the party's critic and responsible for that leadoff speech. Of course, after that one hour by the member for Cambridge is done, and there are 10 minutes of questions and comments, I will have the floor for an hour. I look forward to the opportunity to address Bill 69 in the broadest sense. We'll not be tunnelling long and deep. We'll be looking at this from the broad perspective, and I'm sure the minister won't mind. I'm sure the minister will appreciate it.

I do want to note that the parliamentary assistant, the member for Thornhill, who did all the heavy lifting, who carried this bill through second reading, who stewarded it through committee with great skill, gets pushed aside when it comes time to take the glory. The minister sends his parliamentary assistant out to do the heavy lifting, but when it comes to the glory days and the spotlight, here's the minister instead of Mr. Racco. I find that remarkable.

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Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate. Contrary to what has been said, I think the Ontario economy is moving along quite well, and this can only add to the stability of that economy.

When I had a chance to work for Minister Peters and for the former Minister of Labour, Mr. Bentley, one part of the job as parliamentary assistant that I looked forward to the most was sitting down with representatives from business and labour at the same table and seeing how we could move forward together on legislation such as this. One thing that became clearly evident is that business and labour did want to work together. They understood that both parties needed and wanted the enforcement of workplace safety legislation in Ontario to be more effective and more efficient. Both parties came forward and said, "Focus on the bad guys. Focus on the repeat offenders. Make sure you get those people who routinely try to flout laws such as this to use to their own competitive advantage. They are the people we want you to target this legislation at."

So, obviously, as a government we've hired more inspectors, and both parties—labour and business—want to make those inspectors work more efficiently. That's what this proposed bill did, that's what this proposed bill is intended to do, and, should this House choose to pass it, that's what I think we'll see in practice on a daily basis in the workplaces around Ontario.

When they leave in the morning, everybody expects loved ones to return home. Quite often in Ontario, unfortunately, that's not always the case. Somebody leaves for work, and during the day there's a phone call made that that person is in the hospital. This bill and the support of this bill can only strengthen our ability to make sure that when you go to work in the morning, you come home to your family at night.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to make a few comments on this bill this evening. I want to first of all congratulate the Scouts for being here. I think it is very important that they have the opportunity to be here. I have to tell you that one of the things that is so easily forgotten in our system is the fact that there are many people around the world who would love to have what we have—so often we forget that—and that would be the opportunity to have this publicly debated and to have you here to join us.

With the remarks that the minister made on this bill, the issue that I think will be the method upon which it is judged as successful or not is the whole notion of needing rules and compliance, but the balance that is required to make sure that this—yes, you need inspectors, yes, they have to have a legislated mandate, but they have to remember that there is more done with the carrot than the stick, so a clear understanding and good relationships with those people who, as the entrepreneurs within our community, are providing the jobs and the service. Most people don't willingly do the wrong thing. They are looking for opportunities to conduct their business in a way that allows them to stay in business and to have a safe workplace. So I think one of the tasks is to ensure that kind of balance.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister of Labour, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I want to thank the members from Halton, Niagara Centre, Oakville and York North for their participation in the debate this evening. Yes, we recognize that we are facing challenges on the manufacturing side in this province, but that's why we have not given up on continuing to make investments. I remind the member from Halton that the next time he drives down to visit my riding, as he drives by Woodstock, to look at that Toyota plant, the first greenfield automotive plant in 15 years going up in this province. Look at the CAMI plant. I'm proud to have bought a new Equinox from that CAMI plant that's built by my friends and neighbours, built right here in Ontario. We made a substantive investment in there as well.

To the member from Niagara Centre: This is exciting legislation. This is exciting, I say to the member, because it's groundbreaking. This is the first time we're getting government out of a silo mentality. We've got 13 ministries working together to better share and coordinate information. That is exciting. You didn't do it when you were in government. I'm excited that we're able to move forward with our IIE secretariat to make this happen.

I do recognize—and I pointed this out in my speech—and thank my parliamentary assistant, Mario Racco, for

his work on carrying this bill forward. I thank Mario very much. And I thank my former parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville, who is also witness to the investments that our government is making in manufacturing in this province, to see that flexible Ford Oakville plant making those wonderful vehicles such as the Ford Edge. Those are investments in our future.

To the member from York North: I agree with you. We've got to strike that balance between rules and compliance. But for somebody who is going to put the health and safety of a worker in this province at risk or do anything to destroy or harm the environment in this province, I have no sympathy. The arm of the law of this province needs to address anyone who breaks our laws.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I wish I could say—

Interruption.

Mr. Martiniuk: Oh, I've lost my audience. The Scouts are leaving. I was going to tell them about the ad that I have for the Scouts in my annual calendar. I think they're a great organization and they share a page with the Girl Guides in my calendar. I got their attention before they left.

It's my pleasure this evening to address the matter of Bill 69, which I think is a very important but terribly flawed bill. It's such a pleasure; it truly is a pleasure to really get talking about the law again. You know, we've got day after day of crooked lotteries. We've got day after day of millions being given to the friends of the Liberal Party, just handed out willy-nilly, no application forms. They don't even ask who they are, just, "You want some money? You've got it." They keep saying, "Oh, we're giving it to good people." They're not giving any to Cambridge, they're not giving any to Kitchener. It's all located where their friends are. They're all here in downtown Toronto. But in any event, I'm not discussing that tonight, thank goodness, because I'm tired of hearing about all of that mess.

We're here to talk about Mr. Peters' bill, and, boy, has he been sold a bill of goods by the bureaucracy. That's the only way I can put it. I would like to be able to say what Henry VIII said to his wives, "I won't keep you long," but unfortunately, I am afraid I'm going to take at least an hour or as much as the Speaker will permit me to speak. Basically, I'm just a warm-up act for the member from Niagara Centre. That's what I'm known as. He is known throughout this Legislature as a magician of verbosity, a raconteur extraordinaire, and he will make these dull, drab sections come to life. I can hardly wait. I'm looking forward to it. So I'm the warm-up act and I'll do my best, but the pièce de résistance is yet to come.

We're dealing with Bill 69, which is An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, and there are 13 other acts that are, in fact

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Which ones? You've got an hour.

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Mr. Martiniuk: We'll come to that. We'll be reading them section by section for your enjoyment. You will enjoy it, I'm sure.

If I just may say a few preliminary comments, basically this is an act that was dreamed up I believe by the bureaucracy and, as I say, our minister, who has been sold a bill of goods. When you first read it, it seems very innocuous, however I really believe it is a set-up for big government to fight big business. My concern is that in this fight it is small businesses that are going to suffer and suffer terribly in this province.

Small businesses in this province are the backbone of our economy. They produce well over half the jobs every year in Ontario. We heard from a number of organizations that deal with small business, and I will be going into their presentations at great length.

However, to lay the groundwork, first of all, we heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which represents across this nation about 80,000 businesses, if I'm not mistaken, and almost half of those are in Ontario. We also heard from the Canadian Restaurant and Food Services Association, the Retail Council of Canada, COCA—the Council of Ontario Construction Associations—the Ontario Medical Association and, lastly, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, which also had some strong objections to Bill 69. The last one is not the most important, but this is the one that is in the news to a great extent these days. This is the 160,000 manufacturing jobs that we've lost over the last year or so—

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Gone.

Mr. Martiniuk: —that are gone, and a great number of them came, unfortunately, from the automobile industry which that association represents.

This is a serious matter. I believe this bill has created a bureaucratic nightmare which affects not only big business but also small businesses. It institutes super-inspectors. We're no longer satisfied with ordinary inspectors trained in one particular field; we're now going to have super-inspectors with enormous powers marching into small business with all the resources of the Ontario government and, I believe, closing them up.

There's a section in here on which I still haven't got an explanation. I asked at committee and I listened to the explanations. We are going to incorporate gossip and innuendo into a legal bill in this Legislature. There is a section in here that permits inspectors and the government to publish innuendo and gossip in the way of complaints, with no verification of those complaints. This is a smear tactic, and I don't even know why it's in here. We're not talking about convictions now; we're talking about complaints made by who knows what. Not only will these be compiled and distributed in the government, they could be published, unfortunately. They could be libellous and slanderous, but they can be published. I

think that has no place in our regulation of industry in this province.

The super-inspectors will now be able to—will I use the word “spy”?—look the matter over for other inspectors. I call it spying, but you can call it what you wish. There are a couple of problems with that, because they are not trained in the field that they’re making these observations about, and lastly, they’re not under any obligation to even tell the individuals, the business that they’re inspecting. They’re not even under an obligation to warn them and tell them that there is, in fact, a danger there that they perceive. They are not trained in that field so they could be completely wrong. However, if they do perceive a breach of the law that could be a safety issue, they’re under no obligation. I find this amazing that they are under no obligation to prevent an accident from happening that they have observed. We tried to rectify it, and I’ll come to that later.

This is all in the background. We’ve talked about these complaints and these innuendos and libel and slander, and of course, you can’t sue the civil servant. We’re now hearing about our friend Dr. Smith, who may have caused enormous and irreparable harm to some of our citizens in Ontario through his actions as a coroner. He is no doubt protected, as are the civil servants, the inspectors, under this act. They can make mistakes. They can act in such a manner that can cause irreparable harm, and you cannot sue them—just as we are finding out that individuals who have testified at a court trial cannot be sued because they are no doubt protected under a similar section under the act.

What could we, as an opposition, do about it? Let me tell you what we tried to do. In committee—not in this chamber, but in committee—we have the opportunity as an opposition to bring forth certain amendments and suggest that these could assist and help the statute in question. The presentations, especially that of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said very simply, “This act is built for large government versus large business. Let us exempt small businesses from the working of this act, and we don’t have a problem with it.” So the first problem is: What’s a small business? So I brought three motions.

The first motion read:

“I move that section 2 of the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(2) Nothing in this act applies with respect to an organization that employs 200 or fewer people and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing,

“(a) an authorization made under section 7 or 13 does not authorize the collection, use or disclosure of information respecting an organization with 200 or fewer employees;

“(b) observations may not be recorded and disclosed under section 9 with respect to an organization with 200 or fewer employees; and

“(c) section 10 does not authorize the publication of information with respect to an organization with 200 or fewer employees.”

That was defeated. As a matter of fact, I think I was the only one who voted for it. They didn’t feel that that was a small business.

We wanted to give them a choice, because we wanted to give them a chance. So my second one read similarly—if not identically—except that it lowered the definition of “small business.” And it read:

“I move that section 2 of the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

“(2) Nothing in this act applies with respect to an organization that employs 100 or fewer people and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing,

“(a) an authorization made under section 7 or 13 does not authorize the collection, use or disclosure of information respecting an organization with 100 or fewer employees;

“(b) observations may not be recorded and disclosed under section 9 with respect to an organization with 100 or fewer employees; and

“(c) section 10 does not authorize the publication of the information with respect to an organization with 100 or fewer employees.”

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I thought that 100 employees is getting fairly small. In the first one, I think I set the bar too high, but this one seemed like it was in the ballpark. I was fairly confident that we’d have a good discussion and that it would pass. It was unanimous that they turned it down.

Mr. Chudleigh: You voted for it.

Mr. Martiniuk: I voted for it, but everyone else voted against it.

I’m just trying to give them a choice. We started off at 200 and then 100. My next one was 50, because I figured 50 employees is a pretty low number; let’s consider that a small business. Nope. It was indicated that that didn’t look like it was going to pass. So what I did is the following:

“I move that section 2 of the bill be amended by adding the following substitution:

“Nothing in this act applies with respect to an organization that employs five or fewer people, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing;

“(a) an authorization made under section 7 or 13 does not authorize the collection, use or disclosure of information respecting an organization of five or fewer employees; and

“(b) observations may not be recorded and disclosed under section 9 with respect to an organization of five or fewer employees; and

“(c) section 10 does not authorize the publication of information with respect to an organization with five or fewer employees.”

I can honestly say I was shocked when this was turned down by a majority of the committee, who I guess were under orders to just throw out any and all—I mean, this is a mom-and-pop organization. There’s no doubt it was described as such at the hearing and everybody agreed that less than five is a pretty small number. Though as I understand it, from a small business standpoint, some

75% of our small businesses employ less than five. We could have prevented these super-inspectors, this monster of a bureaucracy, walking into a mom-and-pop organization. Here we've got not five but only two, with mom and pop running this thing, and in come the super-inspectors with the enormous powers given to them by this, and they just fling them out. What chance do these people have? What chance? None.

I thought for sure—I mean, the mom-and-pops. I know the Minister of Labour; he's a nice person, a forthright person, and I know he believes in small business. And yet they were ordered to turn this down, probably by the centre; the bunker told them this wasn't a good thing to do, so they turned it down.

I'll tell you, it was difficult to go on. I was really disheartened. If it wasn't for my friend Peter Kormos being present, constantly giving me the support and enthusiasm, I would have given up. I said, "No, we are going to go on with this bill."

The next section I really got concerned about, and people making presentations indicated their great concern, was paragraph 7 of section 4 of the act.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I think the minister is reconsidering.

Mr. Martiniuk: Well, I hope so.

Here it is. This is the section that provides that the minister and his inspectors can collect information to be used and "disclosed." That's the relevant word. It's one thing to be collected, but the minister and his inspectors have the power to publish and disclose this information. The information is about complaints, and it reads, "Information about complaints filed in respect of an organization where the complaint is regarding conduct that may be in contravention of designated legislation." Here we go. Here's a section that says that if the minister becomes aware of a complaint against a company, they don't have to record who made the complaint, they don't have to record whether the complaint was made in good faith, they don't have to look at the bona fides, they do not have to check the veracity of the complaint; they can take that information and publish it to the world.

I can honestly say that I have never seen a section like this in my short tenure of 12 years in this Legislature, and when I asked the bureaucracy why they would put in a section like this, the answer I received was, "We've always done this." In any event, I thought, "Oh, for sure we can have this section eliminated." But I was disappointed again, unfortunately. That motion was turned down.

But I wasn't going to give up, because I had a compromise, and the compromise was very simple: that before the complaint was published, it would not have to be verified as a valid complaint; all they would have to do is verify the fact that the complaint was made bona fides, in other words, that it was made in good faith and not for an improper purpose. I presented that and we had prolonged discussion, and I was disappointed again. It just kept happening.

We moved on to section 9 of the bill. Section 9 provides that one of these individuals who is making an

inspection in their particular field can spy for other ministries and make observations and report those observations to their spymaster, whoever they might be, whatever silo there is. I tried to get that removed, but they wouldn't remove it. I said, "Well, here's a compromise. Let's work on this. There could be a problem of safety in this observation." This person has recognized, even though they're untrained—there's no doubt they're untrained. We're talking about using unskilled labour in this inspection, because they're not in any way trained for the field other than that they're there. For instance, if they were there doing an inspection for the finance department and an audit of the books for GST and they noticed a health-related problem, which they are totally untrained for, they could disclose that problem to an inspector designated in that field. I thought that if there is a health problem, then surely it's important that the observation be brought to the attention of the proprietor of the business. He has other employees, including themselves; if it's a mom and pop, there's only two of them. If there's something improper with the flooring, for instance, that people could slide, that it didn't comply with the regulations, then they should be aware of it before that inspector leaves, for their own safety. I thought that was a fairly reasonable request. But unfortunately, the members of the government party who were sitting on the committee unanimously turned that down too. I was getting somewhat dispirited, I must admit.

We're just going to continue. There was subsection 10(4). I'll just have to get it; this is printed on both sides, so it's somewhat difficult. I just don't have this enormous staff that the minister has, who are writing his speeches for him and things of that kind. I have to do it all by myself. We'll work on it.

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In any event, paragraph 3 of subsection 10(4) dealt again with "Information about complaints filed in respect of an organization where the complaint is regarding conduct that may be in contravention of the" act. That was similar to one I'd already moved, and it again was turned down.

I think there was a total of nine amendments made by the official opposition, and all of them were turned down by the government party. Just to put this in perspective, there were a number of changes and motions for amendment of the bill brought by the government in that committee, and of course all of theirs passed. It's not as if amendments do not pass in committee. It just depends, I guess, who is proposing them—whether they're reasonable or not doesn't have much to do with it.

You've gotten the picture. We attempted a number of amendments that I thought were reasonable and would be improvements to the bill. Some of the motions, rather than black and white, were shades of grey: small business being defined from 200—which was unacceptable—to 100, to only five, a mom-and-pop business. That still wasn't suitable. I bent over backwards to be as reasonable as possible, but unfortunately the committee was not hearing any part of it on that particular day. Maybe I got

them on a bad day—I can't say—but unfortunately we did not succeed with any of the amendments.

But we do have the presenters. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business was most concerned about this bill, because they do represent primarily small businesses. It's especially important because, as they indicated to us:

"The Canadian Federation of Independent Business's December 2006 survey of small business performance expectations shows that confidence and optimism declined in Canada for the fourth quarter.

"The National Business Barometer Index is at 107 points, more than a point-and-a-half below its September level, which indicates the Canadian economy remains in a stable though less spectacular shape.

"Similarly, business optimism in Ontario has been persistently losing traction in the last year, trailing the national average for a fourth consecutive quarter.

"The quarterly Business Barometer Index for Ontario, which reflects how well businesses in the province expect to perform in the next 12 months"—and we're in the first quarter of the next 12 months now—"has lost one or more points since September and now stands at 106.3.

"Only a year ago, Ontario ranked third among all provinces, just behind the surging economies of Alberta and British Columbia. It is hard to accept that in 2006 the province was quite confidently surpassed by Nova Scotia at 111.1 and New Brunswick at 107.4 and now shares the fifth spot with Saskatchewan."

Their survey indicates some concern with the small business sector in Ontario, which makes this bill all the more onerous if it eventually passes this Legislature in its present form. So they wrote to the committee and testified, by letter dated April 28 on the letterhead of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, directed to the Honourable Steve Peters, Minister of Labour:

"On behalf of CFIB's over 42,000 small and medium-sized independent business members in Ontario, we write to express our deep concern with the recently announced Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006.

"Let us be very clear about one aspect of regulation at the outset: CFIB and its members do not believe that regulation is inherently a bad thing. On the contrary, adequate regulation is an absolute necessity for a decent and prosperous society. And, to go even further, it is possible to identify a laudable, good-for-society objective in almost every regulation now in existence.

"There is, however, another very important but too often ignored issue. It is this: Is the accumulated amount of regulation within the capacity of businesses to cope and the capacity of government to administer?

"Government's capacity to administer regulation is finite. Regulation requires significant government resources—policy development, communications and enforcement. Much of the government regulation that already exists is inadequately communicated and enforced. The Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006 reflects the Ontario government's own assessment that, at present, its ability to administer regulation is not all that it should be. What about business's capacity to cope?

"Consider point 4 in the enclosed CFIB information sheet, the Need for Regulatory Realignment. There is a huge gap between the existing amount of government regulation and the capacity of small business to comply. This regulatory burden comes out of their personal and family lives. This is more than adequately documented in the enclosed CFIB report, Prosperity Restricted by Red Tape.

"Consider the Regulatory Modernization Act of 2006 in this context: It will ramp up, you stated, Minister, the enforcement of '85 statutes and almost 600 regulations'."

That's what they're saying: It's affected 85 separate laws or statutes and almost 600 regulations. I can assure you that you're not going to read in a weekend 85 statutes and 600 regulations. It's going to take you more than a weekend to read and comprehend the importance of those regulations and statutes. I would say it's more like two to three weeks, if not a month, depending on how rapidly you read.

"There is a mountain of related interpretative material and case law connected with these statutes and regulations. Does the Ontario government expect the owners of small businesses to have the capacity to read, understand and cope with all the requirements involved? With respect, this would be a preposterous expectation.

"As a consequence, small businesses are 'sitting ducks' for the measures contained in the proposed act. The idea of posting 'rule-breakers' on the Internet is not unlike the long-discredited practice of placing citizens in stocks in the public square.

"The Ontario government obviously doesn't believe that it could train individual civil servants"—who, by the way, don't have a business to run—"to meet its expectations of business. According to the minister's statement, 'By creating teams of field staff from different ministries, we could work together to target repeat violators. This would remove the competitive advantage these rule-breakers seek to gain and support reasonable businesses that comply with the laws.'

"The Ontario government requires teams to do the job. How can it imagine for a moment that individual small business owners have the capacity to deal with the existing monstrous overload of regulation? They can't, particularly when one considers that these same small business owners face a mountain of federal and municipal regulation as well.

"In light of the above, we respectfully ask you, Minister, to refrain from putting the proverbial cart before the horse. The need is to streamline and reduce Ontario's regulations of SMEs, do a better job of communicating the requirements and, where appropriate, deliver compliance assistance before any ramping up of enforcement is in order.

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"The ancillary pilot project to streamline regulation in auto repair may indeed be headed in a positive direction. But that tiny initiative certainly is no excuse for an about-face to the old regulation-enforcement paradigm that brought us to the quagmire we're in today. The CFIB

strongly recommends that before the substance of the Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006, (i.e. the enforcement push) is brought to bear on SMEs, the regulatory burden must be brought into line with the capacity of SMEs to cope with it. To do otherwise would be the height of harshness and unfairness. This approach, moreover, would be in line with the Premier's pre-election commitment to the CFIB and its members 'to reduce the bureaucratic workload on small business.'

"We must note that your government has substantially increased this workload in the past two years, while sadly, we are unaware of any requirements that have been removed. May we please have your assurance, Minister, that you will substitute the approach we advocate for the one that you have announced."

It's signed on behalf of that organization, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

I don't know how much time I have, but possibly we will go to a very important—

Mr. Hudak: Not enough.

Mr. Martiniuk: I know that I stand between you and hearing from my friend from Niagara Centre, who can hardly wait. He's sitting there, and he can't contain himself at all. He's looking forward with great expectation and excitement to performing another miracle—that's the only way I can put it. He's a man of miracles; however, he's going to have to wait. So bear with me.

I thought that the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association was most appropriate, especially with the loss of 130,000—I think the last figure was greater.

Mr. Chudleigh: One hundred and thirty thousand manufacturing jobs.

Mr. Martiniuk: One hundred and thirty thousand manufacturing jobs. Those manufacturing jobs, by the way, are good-paying jobs, and they're being replaced in many cases with part-time and contract work without benefits, without good pay.

We don't have a plan. I'm becoming concerned, not so much for myself but for our children, that we're careening down a path and we don't know where we're going to end up. We do know that we're losing good-paying jobs, 130,000—the city of Cambridge just reached 130,000 population. That just happened during the last year. We like to think that we're a good-sized municipality—the former municipalities of Preston, Hespeler and Galt—and we're talking about exactly that number of people losing their jobs, an army marching into the darkness. It truly is totally unfortunate.

I've been involved personally with some groups that have lost their jobs in my municipality. Everybody digs in to help. Our labour council sent down people. We met in my constituency office, and we processed about 100 of the employees who had lost their jobs, with the help of representatives of the labour council of our region and with the help of the municipality. So the community is joining in, but I really am concerned for the future, that maybe our children will not be as well off as we are, because we are a wealthy people in southern Ontario. It's unfortunate that I'm a little gloomy about the future, but

I'm not alone. I've talked to many people from my municipality, and they are really uncertain about the future of their children.

In any event, let's talk about the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association letter. For the most part, this is big business speaking. They say, "The CVMA generally supports the intent of proposed Bill 69—Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006; however, we have some specific concerns related to the broad scope of the proposed legislation and the potential for unintended consequences that may therefore result."

It's a phrase I am very partial to: "unintended consequences." Many times, we in this Legislature speak to draft laws or draft amendments with the best intentions, but we've not been able to foresee all the ramifications, some of them adverse, some of them beneficial. The beneficiaries are a plus, but it's the unintended adverse consequences we didn't envision that somehow can surprise you, unfortunately very unpleasantly. That's what they're talking about: It doesn't matter what the good intentions behind this bill are if there are adverse consequences.

"Some clarification has been provided by the government about the objectives in the bill since it was introduced, but we are concerned that such clarification has not been reflected in the bill as currently presented. CVMA believes it essential that the standing committee address these concerns and propose appropriate amendments so they are reflected in Bill 69.

"Our specific concerns are as follows:

"1. Section 4—The types of information which may be collected, used and disclosed under the bill are defined extremely broadly and beyond that necessary to meet the policy intent of the bill. The types of information include 'any other type of prescribed information', 'statistical information about an organization', 'information in connection with an examination, test, audit, inspection, investigation or other inquiry', 'information about complaints filed' and 'information about an organization's compliance with designated legislation'. Business statistical information and information in connection with examinations, tests, audits, inspections, investigations and other inquiries would appear to include information independently collected by a business, including information collected by the organization about its environmental or health and safety performance. Compliance information would appear to include information generated by the organization such as self-assessments. To include these types of information could unnecessarily place at risk business confidential information and discourage organizations from improving their performance by conducting self-assessments and collecting metrics on their performance. These particular categories of information should be clearly limited to such information that is required by law to be provided to the government.

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"Given the competing interests with regard to protecting confidential and proprietary business information and personal information, it is also important that the bill not contain such a broad regulatory discretion as 'any other prescribed information.'

"While we would prefer that the types of information that may be collected, used and disclosed under the bill be specifically limited to types of information that are actually required to be shared by ministries to assist in enforcement, we recognize that it may be difficult for the ministry to achieve this objective. One method of addressing concerns about the broadness of ... disclosure of information, would be to add a purpose clause to the bill. This purpose clause could specify the purpose of the legislation and therefore, serve to assist in interpreting the intent and scope of the bill." That just wasn't done.

"(2) Sections 5(8) and 5(9) and (10)—The provisions relating to the collection, use and disclosure of information to the public are too broad. The proposal to make public business statistical information and business-generated compliance information is of concern as it could affect the willingness of businesses to continue to collect statistics internally to track their performance and conduct self-assessments. Public disclosure of complaints filed may unjustly injure a company's reputation. In our view, it is not appropriate and would be premature to disclose complaints against an organization as such complaints could eventually be determined to be not well founded and may be triggered by extraneous circumstances. As noted above, only compliance or business statistical information that is required by law to be submitted by organizations to the government and that is not confidential business information should be disclosed to the public. Only the government's response to complaints or convictions or contraventions under designated legislation which result from judicial process should be disclosed to the public. Finally, by including 'any other type of information that may be prescribed' within the category of information that may be made available to the public, it could unnecessarily undermine the ability of organizations to maintain business confidential information and to operate competitively.

"In the event that information is posted to a website, we would strongly recommend that guidelines be developed to address the issue of maintaining the currency of such information. We would recommend that information older than three years be removed.

"(3) Section 5—The inclusion in the purposes for which information may be collected, used and disclosed in this section of 'any other prescribed purpose related to the administration and enforcement of designated legislation' is again too broad. It appears to take away certainty as to how the legislation would apply and provides the government as a whole with too much discretionary power especially when there are competing public policy issues of privacy and confidentiality of business information.

"(4) Section 7—The authorization process as written does not appear to be sufficiently robust to prevent abuse. In our view, the minister should not delegate the power to issue authorizations. If authorization is delegated it should not be below the director level. We have noticed that there does not appear to be any requirement for notice to an affected organization or mechanism to dis-

pute that the scope of the authorization granted does not comply with the statutory authority.

"(5) Section 9—In order to ensure health and safety and protect the environment, we would strongly recommend that the bill require a person who makes an observation that is likely to be relevant to the administration of another act or regulation and intends to give a 'heads up' also provide notice to the regulated organization. Such notice will help to ensure that any such concern is addressed on a timely basis."

That is the letter from that organization, which is the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association. It's certainly an important organization, as we know.

My time is fast coming to an end. I realize that not only the viewing audience but also the audience in the cheaper seats, in the bleachers, on the other side are looking forward to hearing from my good friend and colleague the member for Niagara Centre, but I think you're going to just have to wait a few moments longer. I'll let the expectations build up.

Unfortunately, I don't know if we'll have time to read the Retail Council of Canada's concerns. However, this is an important organization. It represents a great number of businesses, and employees, for that matter, in Ontario. Nationally, they generated \$391 billion in sales in 2006. In Ontario, the retail sector is a vital part of Ontario's economy. In 2006, it achieved more than \$140 billion in sales, an increase of 4.1% over the previous year. There are more than 85,600 retail establishments in Ontario. Without going through the details, they were most concerned with sections 4, 13 and 10, which we've already heard about from other organizations. Their concerns were similar.

To wind up, I think this act was dreamed up by a bureaucracy that could only see one side of the picture. It was a bureaucracy gearing up with super-inspectors to meet big business head on, when in fact it's small businesses that get in the way, it's small businesses that we rely on in this province for our prosperity, it's small businesses that employ the greater number of people, and it's small businesses that we as a Legislature have the obligation to nurture and let prosper. Unfortunately, this bill negates that possibility, or could cause harm to our small businesses in Ontario.

I thank everyone for your thoughtfulness and patience, but I know you're waiting to hear from my friend and colleague, and I'll sit down at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: I want to thank the member from Cambridge. It was a pleasure working with him on the committee that dealt with Bill 69. I'm going to speak about that at some greater length when I rise in around eight minutes' time to commence my one-hour lead. I know that the member for Cambridge had a whole lot more to say about this issue, because he contributed a great deal to committee, he introduced a significant number of amendments, and he demonstrated, in particular, as he spoke of again today, a sensitivity for small businesses—the real small businesses, as he put it, and as we all recognize them, the mom-and-poppers.

Unfortunately, although I'm going to be permitted to begin my lead this evening, I'm not going to be able to finish it, because of course at some point around 9:30 the government is going to mention to the Speaker that it's 9:30 of the clock and the Speaker is going to then adjourn the House because that's what the rules require.

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I've got to tell you, I'm excited to be here tonight. I am enjoying sharing this experience with the joyful members of this Legislature sitting here alert and intrigued and engaged and oh so interested, riveted by the rather sophisticated discussion of this, as the minister put it, "very exciting" bill. The minister may risk credibility by persisting in referring to it as a rather exciting bill. But I'm prepared to do my very best.

Now, the member for York South–Weston is going to have a couple of minutes too. I'm looking forward to his comments and to Mr. Martiniuk's as well.

Hon. Mr. Peters: There were a couple of times where the honourable member went a little off-topic. I would certainly encourage him to talk to Ray Tanguay, the president of Toyota Canada, which is located in his home riding, and look at the investment that Toyota is making in this province. Drive down the 401 at Woodstock and Highway 2 and see that investment.

I was a little disturbed to hear some of his comments. I very much resent the fact that he implies I have been sold a bill of goods by the bureaucracy. That just shows the Conservative attitude to the hard-working bureaucracy, our dedicated public servants who serve the citizens of this province. They fired inspectors: They fired our meat inspectors, laid off fire and health and safety inspectors. It shows the Conservative disregard for the wonderful inspection regime that exists within this province.

I also very much resent the fact that he described inspectors in this province as unskilled labour. I think that is a very shameful thing to direct towards the inspectorate within 13 ministries in this province that we're bringing together.

This is a very important bill. I care about a business, whether it's a small, medium or large enterprise. But I also, as does I think everyone in this House, expect of our businesses that they make sure they follow the laws, that they follow environmental laws, health and safety laws, employment standards laws and so on. I don't think it's fair to have anyone undermining the laws in this province and using that as a competitive advantage to hurt and harm good businesses in this province. If there are individuals who are not following the laws, we're going to make sure that they do follow the laws. The Regulatory Modernization Act gives us that opportunity for 13 ministries to work more closely together.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the comments of my colleague for Cambridge, who worked very hard as the critic on this legislation and brought forward a number of sensible amendments to the bill, sadly voted down one by one by what he accurately described as a whipped Liberal committee. Whether whipped by the minister or

other members of cabinet who were here, they were whipped nonetheless.

I found it interesting that the minister talked about his determination to make sure that those who are undermining laws in the province of Ontario are taken to task. Living close to Caledonia and my riding bordering Caledonia, I'm sure residents of Caledonia would enjoy the minister's comments, to see the irony there, where we have ongoing lawlessness in that area. The same thing regarding the occupation of the railway track in Deseronto in eastern Ontario: I'm sure my colleague from Northumberland is quite concerned about how that took place. So it will be interesting to see if the minister truly will stand by his word that if somebody is undermining laws in the province of Ontario, they will be taken to task. We even have in Niagara, and I know in the Kingston area and I suspect in Windsor and other areas as well, people who are not following the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, who are not putting forward if they had made over \$100,000 in salary. Interestingly, the Minister of Municipal Affairs said it's not his responsibility. Heavens to Betsy, it's a provincial law. You would think, if you are going to be supporting provincial laws in the province of Ontario and going after those who are undermining them, we'd see some activity from the Minister of Labour in that regard.

My other interesting point was that the minister said we have a wonderful inspection regime in the province. There's no doubt that there are some very skilful and hard-working inspectors. Sadly, there are some on occasion who may not be as wonderful and skilful. I know that gas well inspections in the province are causing great concern in my neck of the woods, as well as Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): As I rise here for a very brief interjection, I think of thousands of my constituents who I'm sure are at home right now gripped in front of their sets trying to decide whether it's the hockey game or the evening session of the Legislature tonight. I realize that for them it's probably a most difficult decision, made much more difficult by the presentation of the member for Cambridge.

This was the first time I had in this House the opportunity to listen to his words, and let me tell you, his presentation was electrifying. I am only sorry that our friends the Boy Scouts left before he was fully engaged, because I think they would have earned more than one badge had they sat through his entire 52 minutes.

I only have a minute or so left, and given the government's recent actions to invoke anti-democratic closure on a number of bills, this may very well be my only opportunity to speak to this bill, on which—we don't know—closure may be invoked tomorrow, the way this government has been working.

I want to pay tribute to a great Ontarian who contributed to the final composition of this bill, Leah Casselman, who was referenced by the Minister of Labour, who led her union through great times and also difficult times. At the end of the day, Leah was there to stand up for her

members but also for all Ontarians. I believe that her contributions, not just on this bill but to the well-being of our province, deserve considerable applause from all members of this House. She is a friend and a supporter. She recently retired, and I was saddened to hear that she will not be around for most of September and October, which is unfortunate for those of us who have counted on her wise counsel in the past. She'll be traveling overseas. To Leah—I'm sure she's watching tonight—arrivederci, as she looks forward to her trip to Italy and beyond in the fall.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Cambridge, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Martiniuk: I'd like to thank the member for Niagara Centre, the Minister of Labour, and the members for York South–Weston and Erie–Lincoln for their comments in regards to my presentation.

I'd like to clarify one thing: If the Minister of Labour would like to read Hansard tomorrow, he will find that when I referred to inspectors being unskilled labour, I was referring to the peripheral scope presented by this act. That's exactly the great flaw in this act: that you've got an accountant sent in to do an audit on GST or retail sales tax and you expect him, without any training, to somehow make an observation in regards to the health and safety of employees on the premises without warning them if you observe something. That, unfortunately, I believe is unskilled labour in that peripheral way, and it won't work. I don't believe it'll work. It'll cause more harm than good.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: I want to commend the member for Cambridge for his incredible interest in the bill and his work in committee. He presented a number of thoughtful amendments, attempting to respond to the submissions made to the committee, and he demonstrated a very thorough understanding of the issues being discussed in Bill 69.

Let's understand, this bill has been around for over a year now. Government sat on this since February 2006.

Just on Saturday night, the member for Erie–Lincoln and I were down at Club Rheingold on Yager Road in Port Colborne because they were having their 55th anniversary celebration and dinner. The member for Erie–Lincoln—he was there with his wife—leans over to me and says, “Pete, when do you figure they're going to be calling Bill 69?”

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Mr. Hudak: That's a reasonable question. I had forgotten about it.

Mr. Kormos: Hudak notes that it has been on the order paper for a year-plus now. It was presented to us as something of, oh, significance and great importance, and the minister suggested that there was some urgency.

So here we are at Club Rheingold, the 55th anniversary of that group. I should tell you also that it was fabulous, because I ran into Werner and Bertl Ratz from Welland. They had just celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. They've been members of Club Rheingold

ever since they came to Canada in 1953. I was so pleased to find out that they had celebrated their 60th; so was the member for Erie–Lincoln.

While he and I spent some time discussing Bill 69, I interjected a little bit about Werner and Bertl Ratz—truly remarkable people. Werner had started shipping out from the port of Hamburg at the age of 14, in Germany, and by the time he was 18 had visited Africa, South Africa, had sailed most of the oceans of the world. Of course, the war came. He was drafted, became a submariner as a teenager, as a very, very young man. Fortunately, he survived the war, and in the tragic aftermath of the war in Germany, 1947, found time for love and married Bertl. The member for Erie–Lincoln will remember that right after our conversation about Bill 69, I mentioned to him how Werner had come to Canada preceding—his wife had two babies by then. He worked on the tunnel at the hydro production facility down in Niagara Falls, at Sir Adam Beck.

Shortly afterwards, Bertl came—his wife—and two kids, the youngest a one-year-old, still a babe in arms. She worked as a housekeeper because she didn't speak English. She worked at the Humberstone shoe factory—hard, hard work; dangerous work too. Then she worked at Lanark, down in Dunnville. It's shut down now. They built wiring harnesses for cars—again, hard, hard work; very low pay. There was the great Lanark strike, of course, when workers fought back. I remember that Yvette Ward was one of the key people in a leadership role in that strike. I was just mentioning that Werner and Bertl Ratz are just tremendous people, great Canadians, lovely people. They raised their two daughters—grandkids, great-grandkids—and they're still as lively and vibrant and active in their community as anybody could ever expect.

One of the things we had occasion to mention is that their story was the story of German Canadians, and the story of German Canadians is the story of so many Canadians, people who immigrate here, people who work incredibly hard, people who have a passion for their new country but a love for their heritage, their culture and their homeland, and that's an incredibly important thing.

As a matter of fact, just earlier tonight I was sitting here and I was reading. This was an interesting comment, because it's applicable to our multicultural community: “Enhancement, not elimination, of human diversity must be our goal.” It's so brief, pithy in itself. Enhancement of diversity, not elimination of diversity, must be our goal. I intend, quite frankly, member for Erie–Lincoln, on plagiarizing that line over the course of the coming months and hopefully the coming years as I speak to multicultural groups like you and I have occasion to attend.

Bill 69, Speaker—because I know that you are a person who's guided by the rules, and I say to you that we're within the context here of Bill 69.

One of the remarkable things was the presentation made to us about small business, and just as the member for Cambridge indicated when he was introducing amendments to try to provide relief for small business from the most onerous provisions of any number of regulatory

regimes—there are some people in this country, in this province, in this chamber, who think that a small business is 150 non-union employees. When you took the data that was made available to the committee, it wasn't 150; it wasn't 75; it wasn't 50; it wasn't five. Most small businesses are two—mom and pop—the kind of business my family had.

My grandparents had a small business; they ran a small grocery store back in the 1930s, before the supermarkets came. They ran a little store on Crowland Avenue; the building is still there. Mind you, they were illiterate in their own language, never mind English—it's true—but they managed to calculate the prices. One of the remarkable things is that even now, 20 years later, when I campaign in provincial elections—of course, 20 years ago, when I first campaigned, there were more of these folks still alive. There are folks who, if they don't remember—because many of them are dead now—their kids remember how they ran up a tab at this little grocery store, this little mom-and-pop grocery store. They ran up a tab. This was during the Depression—right?—when it was all that much more important.

When we're talking about small business, my own parents ran a small business. My father was a factory worker, but they ran a small business in addition to that, and of course, that was a family-run business. My parents worked there, the kids worked there; my older brother and myself after school, on Saturdays and on Sundays, we worked there. That was the nature of the beast.

I appreciated the member from Cambridge's efforts to not only recognize and understand and acknowledge and try to illustrate to people what the real world of small business is, but his effort to provide relief. Unfortunately, I couldn't concur with him in the method. It's an argument that's there, and I don't want to put words in his mouth, because as you just heard for an hour, he's very capable. He wanted to provide exemptions, if you will, from at least some of the provisions of regulatory standards for small business. I said no. I don't believe that that's the approach. If there are bad regulations—and we heard some wacky examples. Whether they were apocryphal or not, who knows? But even if those particular examples were apocryphal, you can bet your boots that somewhere, somehow, somebody has been denied.

What was one of the illustrations given by the member for Cambridge? It was about the change in the right-to-unionize notice that was to be provided, or the employment standards notice, and a small business that had been fined, according to this report, for not having put up the new poster, when in fact they claimed they weren't aware of the new poster. It was a very small business. It didn't have, in and of itself, consequences. Look: Whether that happened or not, we didn't get the details. If it did happen, and one can suspect that it maybe did, it was an exercise of less-than-mature discretion on the part of somebody in terms of laying the charge, as compared to merely providing a warning and making sure that the new notice or new posting was put up.

I think, as I recall very clearly, there was, both on the part of the member for Cambridge and certainly on my

own behalf, a very clear understanding of the very important role that inspectors from any number of ministries play and the very professional job that they perform. Our concern was the dilution of that skill set. Our concern was the creation of inspectors who are Jacks or Jills of all trades and masters of none, by virtue of creating mega inspectors. That's what our concern was. Nobody suggested for a minute, at least not from the opposition ranks, that those inspectors were anything less than the most committed and well trained and professional people.

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As a matter of fact, on Saturday, April 28, the day of mourning for injured and dead workers across the province, as we gather in our respective communities with working women and men and as we recall—because there isn't one of us who won't be able to—the workers who have been slaughtered in the workplace in our communities, we also reflect on the fact that those workplace deaths, those workplace tragedies, those workplace crimes are preventable. At 8 a.m. Saturday I'm going to be down in Welland with Rob McCallion from the Welland and District Labour Council, down at the injured workers' monument at Merritt Park, right beside the canal—most appropriate, in view of how many lives that canal took over decades and generations in the course of building it. I'm going to be there, I'm sure, with other elected persons. I'm going to be there, I'm sure, with working women and men and trade union leaders.

I might be there with Robyn Lafleur's mother. After we leave the monument at Merritt Park, we're going down to Port Robinson, to the old site of the Esquire Canada plant, where Robyn Lafleur died in that horrid explosion in November 1999. The coroner's inquest that examined the circumstances around the slaughter of Robyn heard evidence that there hadn't been an inspection since 1995 at that site. It was a non-union plant. I firmly believe, I sincerely believe—we're talking about health and safety Ministry of Labour inspectors here. I want to make it very clear that it was nobody's fault in the health and safety Ministry of Labour's inspectors; there simply weren't enough at the time, and the priorities that were established for them by the brass didn't focus on plants like Esquire Canada. Robyn was just a young woman at the time. Her mother, when she attends these memorials, carries, embraces, holds close to her breast and her heart this portrait of Robyn. We're going to go out to that Esquire site—it's just a concrete pad now—up alongside the canal in Port Robinson. There's going to be another memorial service, and a moment of silence, I'm sure, for Robyn and other injured workers.

I'll probably think about an old buddy of mine, a teenage buddy. We used to hang around in the streets in Crowland together, used to hang around Belasky's joint and more than a little bit of time at Blackbeard's pool hall on Severn Street. Donnie Beauchamp was my age. Donnie was operating a crane—a land-based crane, not an overhead crane—and the crane toppled over. He's dead too.

We're going to understand that this business of inspections is not just a matter of wanting to impose red tape on anybody, big business or small. It's a matter of saving people's lives. It's a matter of saving people's limbs and their eyesight and their hearing and their backs from being broken. Donnie Beauchamp, another young worker: The minister knows full well—he made reference to it earlier today—that young workers are at greater risk than seasoned workers, the more mature workers. They are.

A worker who goes into the foundry knows that, notwithstanding all the ear protection in the world, by the time they put in 30 years, they're probably going to have impaired hearing. It's just inconceivable not to. You walk around Welland and you know who worked in foundries or who worked at one of the pipe mills. Have you ever been in a pipe mill? The pipe rolling down, clanging one into the other: That's going on steady as you're producing pipe. If you're one of us who has visited—jeez; Lord thundering—you think the roof is collapsing. It's just a load of pipe rolling down.

I've been in the forges—Haun Forge; shut down now. I told you about that once already. Haun Forge, with a very low-tech safety device: The workers are shackled to their machines. The purpose of the shackles is to prevent their hands from getting—they're handcuffed and chained, and you can't move your hands any further than what the chain allows you, hopefully keeping your hands out of the hammer as it drops or the horizontal hammer.

If you walk around Welland or Port Colborne or Thorold or Hamilton or Sudbury, you know who worked in these places. They're the fellows sitting at the Tim Hortons with the hearing aids, right? If you're looking for a foundry worker, they're the ones who really do have to take their shoes off to count to 10, not 11. That's the toll it takes. Nobody—nobody, nobody—should suffer those kinds of injuries, never mind death, in the workplace. But somehow, an 18- or 19-year-old kid who wants to be an accountant or a doctor or a veterinarian or a parliamentary clerk or an architect and who goes into the foundry to work a summer to try to make some money to pay for his or her tuition—somehow that kid walking away without a hand or an arm really just seems a little bit more tragic, doesn't it?

One of the problems is that we don't have, in our high school curriculums, a basic—and look; please. Here I am, going to suggest something that puts yet another load on teachers, who are already overburdened with expectations and demands. But have you ever been to the course that workers take in terms of toxic chemicals and how to deal with them in the workplace? Most of us have. We've dropped in on those courses or we've stopped in on a graduation day to help give out the scrolls to the workers who have graduated—unless, of course, we're resigned to this province being totally deindustrialized.

Let's talk about the farm. One of the most dangerous workplaces in this province is on the farm or in the agricultural sector. I'm telling you, it's one of the most dangerous workplaces. One of the things that's going to

be happening on Friday is that various health and safety activists are going to be going to any number of high schools talking about workplace injuries, talking about things like the right to refuse unsafe work, hopefully. But the problem is that the right to refuse unsafe work isn't much of a right if you don't know what constitutes unsafe work. That's the problem. The right to refuse unsafe work doesn't amount to much of a right if you don't know what unsafe work is. And let's face it, our workplaces are as varied as can possibly be—the ergonomics issue and repetitive strain injury, RSI. And do you know what one of the issues is? Do you know this, Hudak?

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Mr. Hudak: What's that?

Mr. Kormos: You've got places like Canadian Tire Acceptance, the largest single employer in Welland now, which also, as a financial institution, happens not to have workers' comp coverage. It's a wonderful community of workers. There's an incredible workplace culture there; you know that. They're out there involved in fundraising activities, in volunteer activities. They're out there running marathons, all raising money. It's a fascinating culture that's developed at Canadian Tire Acceptance, to talk about that call centre in particular; there are others that have equally capable and conscientious workers. But there's no workers' comp coverage. Of course, the RSI doesn't happen right away. It doesn't happen when you're at the workplace one year and have just turned 21 so you can perhaps choose another career. It happens to you when you're 55, and when the likelihood—because your arms are all crippled up, huh? You've got carpal tunnel, and it just ain't going to happen anymore.

One of the remarkable things, of course, is that workers and their injuries are, unbelievably, still the brunt of jokes sometimes. You know the joke about the person: "Oh, their bad back" or "Oh, yeah, sure, carpal tunnel." Please. We're talking major pain. We're talking major debilitation. We're talking about the incredible psychological impact of chronic pain.

Esquire Canada: Robyn Lafleur died in November 1999. The place hadn't been inspected since 1995. And it manufactured explosive substances—I don't know, calling it a firecracker factory. But it had tons of this damn stuff that exploded. It was an explosion.

So this is where I'm going to, Minister: We will cautiously—and, indeed, do cautiously—support your proposition about eliminating the silos. Now, for the life of me, in the real world—because you see, we got a chance to talk to some of your civil servants involved in the preparation of this bill, who were very helpful in committee. One of the comments that was made is that this is to a large extent preventive, because the suggestion was that, to a large extent, that information gets transmitted back and forth anyway. A conscientious inspector wouldn't do otherwise. I know you raised it as an illustration, but again, Lord love a duck, if there was a Ministry of the Environment inspector who saw somebody welding without goggles, and I can't think of one

who wouldn't know that that's dangerous, I have no doubt—because I know them; not all of them, but I know a whole whack of them—that that person would say to the plant manager or to the foreman on their way out, “By the way, I saw buddy over there without goggles. Don't you think he should be wearing them?” Come on. In a real-world, practical scenario, that's what happens, because these people are conscientious people, in and of themselves. So this bill is not going to change the reality.

Our concern is about the dilution of the expertise, because it's a two-way street. A meat inspector may not have the expertise to deal with an environmental predicament. On the one hand, you don't want the meat inspector, the person with the expertise in meat inspection, to unnecessarily shut down an operation because of an unjustified apprehension or fear of an environmental crisis; on the other hand, you don't want a meat inspector turning his head away from a potential environmental crisis. Again, for the life of me, the suggestion that somehow inspectors historically have seen what they know to be serious, community-threatening, life-threatening, worker-threatening, environmentally threatening

things happening, and somehow just go “la-di-da-di-da”—how's Hansard going to deal with that: “la-di-da-di-da”?—back to their office and ignore it is just inconceivable. It's just not an accurate reflection of the reality out there.

By the way, on Saturday at 8 a.m., Rose Bisson is going to be joining workers, their families and elected leaders down at the workers' memorial at H.H. Knoll park in Port Colborne. And later that day, at 4 o'clock, we'll be up in St. Catharines, right across the road from CKTB radio station, where the workers' memorial is, on St. Paul Street.

Back to small businesses: While the New Democrats couldn't support the proposition of exemption of small businesses, we do have concerns about the need for small businesses to get assistance in terms of compliance with appropriate regulation. I'll be pleased to pursue that when this debate resumes the next time the order is called.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 of the clock on Thursday, April 26.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Thursday 26 April 2007

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 26 avril 2007



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 avril 2007

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Is a quorum present?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Fonseca, if you could move your motion.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario affirms that its commitment to students in the public education system is so strong that it opposes any attempt to take public money and hand it over to private schools.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Fonseca has moved private member's notice of motion number 58.

Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Fonseca, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Fonseca: I bring forward this resolution because I feel that publicly funded education, like publicly funded health care and many of the services that we provide through taxpayer dollars—these are the cornerstones of our Ontario. If we all work together, Ontario is that much stronger.

My fear here is that if we do not continue along the path that we have over the last three and a half years to increasingly fund our publicly funded education system, we may find ourselves where we were prior to coming to government, where we were closing schools, where we were underfunding our schools, where we had strife and instability in our public school system. I know the people of Ontario don't want to go back there. Because of this, if we did change the way that we are funding our public school system and the way we are collecting our taxes for publicly funded education, we would be looking at a decrease, a take-away, of \$500 million from that system. These funds would be transferred to a private school system. That would mean less accountability in our

schools; it would mean a lack of repairs, fewer teachers and less bringing of education into the classroom.

There have been a lot of positive results with our education plan, and this plan must continue. We've worked hard to support our students, our teachers, our principals, and support staff in schools. We've done this by investing billions of new dollars in education. Because we're working together with educators, we've achieved real results. As I said, we now have peace and stability in our classrooms. Class sizes are coming down, test scores are going up, and more students are graduating.

I know the issue around the Catholic school system has come up, but it is embedded in our history and our Constitution, where Catholics in Ontario are granted the right to a Catholic education system. I've gotten many e-mails around faith-based schools and around private schools. My understanding is that 96% or 97% of all Ontario schoolchildren are attending publicly funded schools. Some have argued that we should be funding other faith-based schools. At this time, the province is in need of funds for our publicly funded education system, so we must continue down the path that we are. I think it would only serve our children if we work together, we bring people together.

I remember my days in grade school. We can talk a lot about numbers, but let's talk about some of the stories. Being in a school that was made up of many different cultural and ethnic groups, one of my best friends was Danny Galzechy—I think his parents had immigrated from Poland—and Robert Warden, a good friend. His parents had been Canadians and his grandparents had been Canadians for many years; they probably came over from Britain.

I learned much from these friends and the various groups. I think it was the first time I ate a perogy, or the first time I went to Scouts, with Robert Warden. In our school system, I remember Mr. Innes. He was one of my first phys. ed teachers. We're bringing more specialist teachers into our publicly funded school system. I remember going out and playing baseball. It's not so much about playing baseball; it's about what happened as we were playing. With so many groups coming together with diversity and tolerance and understanding and inclusiveness and acceptance of each other, we built a stronger team. We were able to learn fair play. We were able to socialize together.

Why this is so important in our communities—as I said, close to 100% of our schools are public schools—is that it makes us a better community, a better society and gives us a stronger quality of life.

1010

We read the news, we look around the world, and in many places there is strife among groups where they have not come together, where there is not an acceptance of new groups to countries. We've seen what's been happening in France or in the UK or even at times in the United States. I feel we are privileged and have a great model here to share with the world. I'm not saying we're perfect, but I think we are about the best it gets. What I see in our community is an understanding of each other, where we do want to work together to make our communities better. That happens a lot through the community school. It is a hub where people come together, parents bring their kids, kids are taught Canadian history, taught about our Constitution, taught about the various cultures we have in Canada, about the classroom and the community where they live and what is great about what they bring. All of this happens in a publicly funded system.

I think the impacts are enormous. Often we hear the Premier talking about what is a virtuous circle. The virtuous circle is one where the community invests in its children and in a publicly funded education system, in our schools, so that those schools are in good repair, so that those students are achieving, so that there is opportunity for all and nobody is being left behind. What happens is that those students, through that learning and that achievement, go on to good-paying jobs. Yes, they will pay taxes through those jobs that will pay for our publicly funded health care system, that will pay for our infrastructure needs, that will make sure we have citizens who have learned about the importance of the environment.

It's great to see what our students do. The environment has been really top-line news. The blue box program came through our publicly funded education system. Our kids come up with great innovative ideas that actually have upward momentum and affect their parents, affect the entire community, affect business etc. From these initiatives, we have seen them move into regional, national and international impacts in their scope.

Let's look at some of the results that have come about: Test scores are up, graduation rates are up, class sizes are smaller. We have put in a great deal more funding: \$18.3 billion is going into our education system, and just in this last budget 781 million new dollars. We can't go back to where we were.

John Tory, in the budget of 2004, voted against historic investments in education; voted against \$2.1 billion of new funding for education, voted against clarifying the effective use of resources, student outcomes, including elementary literacy and numeracy, high school graduation rates, parental engagement, special education, the health and safety of pupils and staff. Mr. Tory voted against this. My fear is that if that's the stand Mr. Tory is taking, he's taking us in the wrong direction. We have to move in the direction that we're going. We see graduation rates going up. We see more students engaged in the learning process. We have made a tremendous differ-

ence that we can't allow to be taken away by a Conservative government.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I find this resolution to be one of the most offensive pieces of legislation ever presented to this House. I find the member's comments this morning to be crass, partisan and offensive to people who are observing this debate. We have students from Bais Chomesh High School here today, representatives from the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding of Faith-Based Schools and a representative from the Parents for Educational Choice. The public will draw their own conclusions about Mr. Fonseca's comments today.

I'm going to quote from the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding of Faith-Based Schools. Here's what they had to say about this resolution and their perception of Mr. Fonseca's intentions: "This resolution is extremely unfair and misleading, since it fails to recognize that, unlike Catholic schools, the small minority of non-Catholic faith-based schools have no choice but to operate as 'private' schools. Excluding all funding for 'private' schools means that non-Catholic faith-based schools will continue to be treated as second-class citizens."

The Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding of Faith-Based Schools includes Armenian schools, Coptic Orthodox Church schools, Evangelical Christian schools, Greek Orthodox Education in Ontario, the Islamic Society of North America (Canada), Khalsa Community School (Sikh), the Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools, the Ontario Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate and others.

Representatives of the coalition, as I mentioned, are here today to observe this debate and to demonstrate their strong opposition to this resolution. Parents for Educational Choice have this to say about Mr. Fonseca's resolution: "Parents seeking the freedom to make alternative educational choices for their children have never, never sought to take money away from public schools. Independent school parents have always asked that government be committed to all students in Ontario, not just those in a particular system, and so this private member's resolution is a weak attempt to mislead the public on this issue."

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Oak Ridges, I know you're quoting, but we do have to be careful. There's a rule that you can't say indirectly what you can't say directly. I caution all members in that respect.

Mr. Klees: It was a strong view of the public.

This resolution therefore must be seen for what it is, namely, an offensive attempt to confuse the issue of funding of non-Catholic faith-based schools in the minds of the public. First, not to differentiate between faith-based schools and the so-called "private" schools, as the member puts it in his resolution, given that the member is fully aware of that distinction and given the province-wide appeal his government has had for the three and a half years past to extend legislation and to fund non-Catholic faith-based schools in a fair and just way—it is unconscionable that the member would come into this

place with a resolution that leaves confusion in the minds of the public on this important issue.

Perhaps Mr. Fonseca has unwittingly presented us with the opportunity, first, to expose his government's crass, partisan posturing on this important issue and to reveal the contradiction and the inconsistencies not only of his government but of his very Minister of Education on this important issue; second, to give us an opportunity to reveal the inconsistent practices of the government of Ontario today on this issue of funding faith-based schools; and finally, the ultimate lack of integrity in the fact that he and many members of his own caucus took advantage of the privilege of faith-based education by attending Catholic faith-based education schools in this province, had the opportunity to have that faith-based Catholic education but would deny it to the 7% of students attending non-Catholic faith-based schools in the province today.

1020

First of all, to his Minister of Education. This is where she stood on the issue of funding for religious schools, as reported by NOW magazine in November 2001: "Kathleen Wynne says the party should have taken a principled stand in favour of funding for religious schools during the election. She says she personally urged McGuinty's advisers to do just that. 'I'm disappointed we didn't come out earlier on this. I think we could have claimed some ground.'"

That was the current Minister of Education. She was right then. She's wrong today. I don't know what has happened to her thinking on this matter, but I can tell you, it's unjustifiable. It is inconsistent with Ontario today.

We live in a multicultural society. We take great pride in welcoming cultures and diversity of religions and celebrate them. This government and this member today take a stand to say that it's all okay for Catholics, but other faiths should have no room—in fact, he's saying the government doesn't have money to extend that kind of funding. This government has \$400 million to put into the casino in Windsor for retrofits but does not have the money to put into faith-based education that would help parents, families, those who consider it not an option that their children attend a faith-based school but consider it a requirement and an obligation; in fact, if they're consistent with their religious beliefs and convictions, they have no choice. Those very parents continue to pay public education taxes, support the public school system and, in addition to that, have the burden of paying tuition for their children to attend the faith-based schools.

I find an unconscionable contradiction in this. What I say to the member is that he should take a very careful look at his own life and ask where he got his education and whether or not the children sitting up in the galleries today shouldn't have exactly the same opportunity as he had to get a faith-based education and help develop the character, the conviction and the depth that faith-based education affords. For him to suggest that somehow John Tory and the PC Party are in any way intent on undermining the public education system is equally as dishonest and unconscionable.

The Deputy Speaker: I think we're going down a road that leads into some danger. You also know that the standing orders say you cannot attack another member. Please, try to keep this debate on a level that's higher than I think we're going.

Mr. Klees: Speaker, I am finding it very difficult. I take your caution, but I suggest to you that I'm lowering myself not even to the point that the member did when he drafted the resolution.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, I just ask that we not do this. I think all members in here can express themselves in a parliamentary way and still get their point across as strongly as they might want to make it. Please.

Mr. Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I will attempt to do that. I'm having a difficult time today doing that, I must admit.

I want to point out the attitude of this government towards the issue of faith-based education. Thousands of petitions have been read in the Legislature over the last three and a half years coming from well-meaning parents and stakeholders challenging, asking and appealing to the government to extend funding to other faith-based schools. It is unconscionable what members in this Legislature did in response to that. A number of petitions were drafted and read into the record here opposing that, and it's very consistent with this resolution.

I want to just read this: "We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support Premier McGuinty in his commitment to giving our children a ladder to success through excellent public education and not spend taxpayer dollars to benefit the few who can afford private school tuitions."

Here is what is unconscionable about this. These petitions that were presented to this Legislature were signed purely by Liberal MPPs. It is a concoction. It was an intention to use a legitimate parliamentary tool to send the message, wrongfully, that the public was somehow opposed to this. It was Liberal MPPs and their staff. I have the record here, and I intend to bring a point of privilege to the Speaker's attention, because this is a crass abuse of Parliament. To be so politically partisan on this issue, to try to confuse the public on this most important issue—I suggest to you, Speaker, that if anyone should be brought to order in this place, it's Liberal members of this Legislature who are abusing their authority, abusing their power and trying to divert attention from what they're not doing.

Speaker, I'm going to have to stop because I will become unparliamentary yet one more time. I'll rest my case. At the end of the day, the people in this province will judge this member and this government for their actions.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Just to follow up on the comments of the member for Oak Ridges, it is always interesting and ironic when one politician accuses another of political posturing. We have to be very careful that as we accuse another political party of posturing, we ourselves aren't then engaging in the same thing. It's a caution to us all in this regard.

I understand that there are strong feelings. I do. I have strong feelings on this as well. I support this particular resolution before us. We have debated this before. New Democrats have stated their position very clearly: We support a public system, which 95% of our students attend. It works relatively well. I will challenge some of the opinions stated by the member for Mississauga East in this regard, but the system on the whole works well. It can work better. I acknowledge that there are strong feelings and that there are supporters here in this House today and outside who would want us to expand our support to other faith-based institutions and other private institutions. I have to say, I do not support that. We have been very clear, and I remain committed to the idea of a public system. But when the member for Mississauga East talks about where we were and where we are and makes a case that where we are is a much stronger place to defend public education, I disagree with the member.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: There's a lot more to do indeed, but where you have gone and where you're going is not where we want to be, because I'm telling you, you are undermining the public system, and I'm going to tell you how. I'm going to tell you how you Liberals are doing that as well.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): You're opposed to higher test scores, I guess.

Mr. Marchese: There are three areas mentioned by my Liberal colleagues, one by the member next to me, from Scarborough Centre—

Mr. Duguid: And a massive capital investment in schools.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marchese: It's okay, Speaker; I don't mind listening to him.

Mr. Duguid: He likes it.

Mr. Marchese: I do like it, but if you don't, Speaker, you call him to order. That's okay.

So the member for Scarborough Centre says, "Marchese is against"—what is it? Class sizes going down?

Mr. Duguid: Smaller class sizes. You appear to be against that.

Mr. Marchese: They made a promise that they would cap class sizes by the end of this year in all of the primary grades. The member for Scarborough Centre is not listening, but that's okay. The case I make is to those watching, not him, because he's not listening.

Mr. Duguid: I'm listening.

Mr. Marchese: Well, you didn't get it. I'm going to repeat it for you. Your promise was that you would cap class sizes in the primary grades to 20. That is a promise you did not keep, could not keep, that you meant to solicit support for. You are spending a whole lot of money and you haven't capped anywhere near half of the classes in the primary grades across Ontario. That's a fact that you yourself—

Mr. Duguid: A significant number.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, significant. It's a promise you made that you could not keep and that you are not keeping.

The other thing they talk about is that scores are up. They manipulate the test. The Tories create testing, and the Liberals continue with that testing. They started manipulating the test. The Liberals continue, and the member wouldn't have a clue about this—

Mr. Duguid: That's not true. It's international standards. It's set by international standards.

1030

Mr. Marchese: He's mumbling. I don't know if you hear him, but what he's saying is that he and his colleagues have created better test scores. What I have said in this House is that they have manipulated the test scores. Speaker, you may not like it, but that's what your government has done.

What have you done? You have increased the length of time in which the students can write that test from six hours to as long as they need. Students can write the test for as long as they want, take as long as they want. That means you no longer have a time period in which to do the test; you have the liberty to take your time. You're manipulating the result. Do you understand, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: In fact, I don't. I think "manipulation," again, is imputing some motive. Please, there are ways to express this if you don't agree with the test. I just like to keep the level of the language on a debating plane, that's all.

Mr. Marchese: I've said this on a number of occasions. I'm surprised you stopped me with my comments. I really don't—

The Deputy Speaker: You asked my opinion, and I gave it to you.

Mr. Marchese: The test has been manipulated. Students can use calculators in the classroom. That's a fact. They could not use calculators before to calculate mathematical questions; they can now. That is a fact; that's not imputing motive.

Mr. Duguid: All over the world.

Mr. Marchese: All over—he's mumbling, without having any knowledge of what it is that his government is doing and what it is that I'm talking about. Of course test scores go up. You politically manipulate the test—that's what test scores are all about—and you're proud of that.

Graduation rates are going up, and they introduce Bill 52, which will force the graduation rate to go up. Why and how? Students are now forced to stay in high school until age 18 if they haven't completed their degree. Bill 52 now allows the Liberal government to farm out programs to any Tom, Dick, Harry and Mary. Teachers will not be the ones teaching the program; anybody can teach them. And why are they doing this? To save money. Why are they farming out programs to anyone outside of the educational system? So that they can create a better result, so that people like the member for Scarborough Centre can say graduation rates are up. They will create the result that they want to produce.

Mr. Duguid: You're paranoid.

Mr. Marchese: Paranoid? So silly.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Don't egg him on.

Mr. Marchese: What else, Mr. Ruprecht? I'm looking forward to your comments as well.

Look what's happening with ESL. We have more ESL students coming into Ontario than we've ever seen, yet we have fewer ESL teachers than ever before—fewer today in the Liberal regime than we did in the Conservative regime. How does that undermine public education? It forces teachers who don't have the skills to teach ESL to now absorb that as an additional responsibility. Some will do well; some will not. They are now into regular classrooms. Is that a good thing for public education? Marchese argues it's a bad thing. You Liberals are contributing to diminishing our public education.

Special ed: You are now allowing for block funding. You've got rid of the ISA funding, intensive support amount, that was paying out \$930 million. You have savings of \$930 million now. It's not going to special education on the basis of need; it's now going on block funding. Schools get money based on how many students they have, not according to their needs or their problems but according to how many students they have. How does that benefit public education? It doesn't. It means students are now going into the regular classroom with ESL students and the teacher has to deal with them. That's an additional responsibility for the teacher. How does that enhance public education? It doesn't; it diminishes it.

Four billion dollars of capital programs: That is the need stated by a Conservative government study that was done in 2002-03. The Liberal government claims they're spending \$4 billion—they're not. The Liberal government says it's a beginning. Sorry, if you were spending \$4 billion, it would not be the beginning, it would be the end, and you would have solved the capital problems in our school system. You are contributing to the erosion of our public system. That's what the member for Mississauga East is doing by presenting such a motion and defending public education. That's why I am attempting to challenge the arguments he makes.

According to the Toronto Star, the chair of the Peel District School Board, Janet McDougald, has announced that they're "open for business"—language we used to hear under the Tories. That business is the private financing of large projects like gyms, pools and even portables. Toronto Catholic District School Board chair Oliver Carroll has said that this will divide communities and Annie Kidder, head of People for Education, has called it two-tier education.

The minister thinks this is okay. The minister is quoted in the Toronto Star saying that it's up to the trustees to determine equity across the board. No, I'm sorry, Minister, it's up to you and your government to determine equity across Ontario, not the responsibility of trustees. Equity across Ontario is achieved by your government—by you, Minister—centrally across Ontario.

Is that helping public education, member from Mississauga East? You may not like to hear it, but it's not. It's

eroding public education. You are allowing for private financing to get into the public system. You are allowing for some boards to have access to money to fix their schools while some other school boards and schools that don't have access to rich parents won't be able to fix their portables and their schools. They won't have access to that money.

Some trustees say that's okay, because if the private sector is helping to build whatever in some schools, they'll free up money for other areas, to other, poorer schools. That won't happen, Minister. What will happen is that the government's contribution will continue to go down. That's what happened under the Tories when they increased tuition fees for post-secondary education and they diminished their contribution to the support of our post-secondary education system. The Conservative government said, "We're increasing tuition fees to bring up quality." It did not bring up quality because government support went down.

Public education is under threat, and when this government says it's okay for the private sector to go and build whatever they want, you are opening it up for business, you are opening it up to breaking our public system down.

I have strong feelings about this particular issue. Parents are raising over \$40 million of their own money. We have gone beyond the bake sale. We're going beyond the skip-a-thon. Now we're saying to the private sector, "It's okay for you to come in." Some of the rump folks here don't want to listen to that, but it's not okay. It is not okay for parents to raise more and more money every year to sustain public education. In the old days the bake sale was for some extras for their students. Now we've moved beyond the bake sale. How could that be okay for Liberals defending public education? It cannot be okay.

The member from Mississauga East says, "Ah, we're not closing schools the way the Conservatives did." Yes, you are. You've closed schools, 154 of them, while you've had a moratorium for a couple of years. You've had a moratorium on school closures, yet you've closed as many schools, if not more, than other governments—under a moratorium. How could that be good for public education when you use that argument as one of your strong arguments, saying, "We cannot go to where we were." We are there. You are there. You're closing schools as well, particularly, as you say, you have—or you had a moratorium.

You talk about underfunding and you accuse the Tories of underfunding and starving the public system. You're doing the same. You promised to reform education financing. Monsieur Kennedy, mon ami, promised to reform it; the other two ministers ahead of him promised to reform it. Your government has not reformed the funding formula. We are in trouble.

1040

You make claims that are never delivered. We need money in our public system to make it better. You talk about more teachers for gym. Sorry, 65% of our schools do not have a physical education teacher. You force the

teachers and the students to jump up and down for 20 minutes, yet they do not have a gym teacher. They do not have a physical education teacher.

Our system is hurting. It's in trouble, and when the public system is in trouble, you are nourishing an interest and a desire for others to say, "We can do better on our own. We can do better outside of the public system." That's what you are nourishing—unbeknownst to you perhaps, but that's what's happening. You strengthen the public system by funding it properly and by funding all of the programs properly, which includes ESL, special ed, music, art and physical education, and fixing our schools. If you want to defend public education, make sure you fund it properly. You're not doing that, member from Mississauga East.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'd like to return to debate on the motion from the member for Mississauga East and to support the motion he has put forward that public funding should go to public schools, not private schools.

I think when we consider the whole issue of should we or should we not fund private schools, it's important to consider the structures and the regulations that surround private schools in Ontario. The regulations, quite frankly, do not put any requirement on private schools to follow the public rules. Let me give you an example. Private schools are not required to use the Ontario curriculum. Some of my friends across the aisle there sort of pass that off, but it's interesting. I was saying—and it was picked up on TV—on one other occasion that private schools don't have to use the Ontario curriculum, and there were some private school parents who heard me say that. We had a call in my office the next day from the principal of the private school. He said that—

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum at this point in the morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Is a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Guelph–Wellington.

Mrs. Sandals: We had a call from this principal and he wanted to know if it would be possible to get a copy of the Ontario curriculum, because the principal of this school didn't actually know what the Ontario curriculum was. So he didn't know how to answer the parents on whether or not what they were teaching their students had any alignment with the public policy of Ontario.

In fact, if you look at private secondary schools, they can only issue secondary credits if they are inspected. There are a number of private secondary schools in this province that are not inspected, which means that when the student graduates from that school, they cannot get an Ontario secondary school graduation diploma. That means that they cannot go on to post-secondary education—colleges and universities—in Ontario because they have no Ontario high school graduation. I don't think we should fund that.

Private schools are not required to hire qualified teachers. Teachers in the four publicly funded systems—

English public, English Catholic, French public and French Catholic, all of which are required to follow the rules—are required to be qualified. That means they have a university degree, they have gone to a recognized faculty of education, many of them have further training through the school boards and many of them have formal additional qualifications. That's not required at a private school. Anybody can teach at a private school.

Because they're not qualified, private school teachers are not required to be members of the Ontario College of Teachers, which is the regulatory board. You might say, "So what if they're not members of the Ontario College of Teachers? Why does that matter?" The reason it matters is that in the four publicly funded systems, if a teacher is disciplined or dismissed because they have abused a child, the employing board is required in law to report that to the College of Teachers. The College of Teachers then has a hearing to discuss whether that teacher's licence should be removed or restricted, therefore making it impossible for them to teach anymore, to have a negative influence on any more students in the four publicly funded systems.

Private schools are not required to do that. In fact, I personally know of various incidents where teachers who have been dismissed from the four publicly funded systems and had their licence lifted ended up teaching in private schools.

When we look at this whole issue of should we fund private schools, my answer is no. There are some excellent private schools out there that do in fact follow the rules, but there are a whole lot of private schools out there that don't follow the rules, and I personally see no reason why public funding should be spent on private schools when there is no guarantee that they are following our regulations.

I fully support the motion from the member for Mississauga East.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I am pleased to rise in strong opposition to the member's resolution today, I want to say off the top. I'm disappointed that such a sad, sorry and small attempt to misrepresent the issue of fairness to people of all faiths in the province of Ontario, as brought forward by the member of the assembly today—of all the issues he could have addressed of importance to the residents of Mississauga East, and he chose a very small part in the assembly here today.

Certainly, I remember as a student at Notre Dame Catholic school in Welland when the decision was made to extend full funding to Catholic schools. I was the second-last class, I think, to have to pay tuition, but I remember the decision that was made and how that impacted us as Roman Catholics. In that time in the assembly in 1985, you look back at the words of Liberals, and we all have great admiration for them—Ian Scott, Sean Conway and Bob Nixon among others—who stood in the place and said it was right to extend funding to Catholic schools, not because of a constitutional necessity but because it was the right thing to do.

I don't know if my friend Mr. Fonseca was a Catholic school student; I was. Now, 20 years later, after UN reso-

lutions, after charter challenges, after almost every single province has moved to address the issue of fairness to people of all faiths in education, we find this petty motion from the Ontario Liberal Party before us today. It gnaws at me as a Roman Catholic that I was able to benefit from support, and my sister after me, while a young person today who chooses to go—or parents who choose for them to go—to a Jewish day school, to an Islamic school, to a Christian school or any other faith-based school, does not have that option. The parents don't have that option, an option that was available to me and my sister that is denied in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, one of the stand-alone provinces to set up that arbitrary border.

Imagine a family that moves here—an immigrant family. They move here from another province, perhaps, and what a bizarre world they would encounter where one faith has support, but if you're not part of that particular faith, the government doesn't recognize your decision to send your child to that school as a legitimate decision. How can we tolerate that in the world of 2007? We just celebrated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms anniversary a few days ago here in the Legislature. The Liberals wanted to wrap themselves in that document then, but when it comes to assisting families who send their kids to faith-based schools, they pull this kind of prank.

I say shame on them, Mr. Speaker. It's time that Ontario moves in the direction of other provinces. We've been called to do it by the United Nations, to have some equity for parents who choose to send their children to these schools.

The member intentionally misrepresents the kind of schools that exist in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr. Hudak: I withdraw that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hudak: The member characterizes inaccurately the kind of schools that we have in the province of Ontario. I tell you that Heritage Christian School was here just the other day from my riding in Jordan; Covenant Christian School in Smithville. You walk through that parking lot—there are far more Chevrolets in that parking lot than Cadillacs, and they're dropping their kids off. Real hard-working families, middle-class families who make sacrifices, pay their full taxes in the public system but get no recognition from the province of Ontario for that choice. To characterize them as bastions of the wealthy and the privileged alone is an egregious mischaracterization. I hope the member will apologize for that.

1050

I guess the Ontario Liberal Party believes it's okay for people of privilege—Gerard Kennedy, for example, benefited from the private school system—but it's not okay for those of modest means. I've heard the Liberals attack families who benefit from scholarships and choose to send their children to faith-based schools. They oppose that recent change in the federal budget and they want to tax those benefits.

Hiving off an opportunity, a free choice for families of modest means—I strongly oppose this. Certainly, no Sean Conway, no Bob Nixon, no Ian Scott for Mississauga East.

Mr. Ruprecht: I'd first like to welcome the representatives of the faith-based schools, educational choice, and the students who are listening to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that the present Liberal government is trying to do its best to ensure that Ontarians get the very best education. That's our interest, and I know that's your interest as well. How do we bridge that in the best way possible?

Mr. Fonseca has done his research on his resolution. He said that we've increased education by \$781 million in one year. If we were supporting faith-based schools and private schools, it would take away—that's what his research indicates—\$500 million from the pot of education in Ontario, for public schools. Mr. Marchese says that, in addition to the \$781 million that this government is already adding to the public pot, parents are asked to raise—how much?—\$40 million more; wow. Out of their personal pockets, \$40 million more.

So how do we handle this in the best way? We know that we need to have a good education, no doubt, because we have to compete in this competitive world, not only in Canada, but we have to compete internationally. How do we do that best? By providing the best education we can. Our Premier is known as the education Premier, so we try as best as we can to support him to do just that, to make our kids competitive on this international global scale and in this environment.

I have no doubt that if there was enough money, we would support faith-based schools and private schools, if there was enough money there. But there's just one other item that we should also consider and address. It isn't just the money, but what we need to do is to get these students who are in faith-based schools and in some private schools—we know, sitting here, in our hearts, that they are taught by some of the best teachers there are. And you're right here with them, some of them. We have some of the best students right here, sitting in this Legislature today. They attend some of the best schools.

My friends, we need you. We can't have you, in a way, separating them out from those who are coming to Canada. They are new immigrants. There are thousands of immigrants. I ask you, where is our tool for nation-building? Where? Is it the family? How can the family expect to be nation-building in a new immigrant home? Where? If it isn't the school, where? Is it the churches? Are they nation-building? Is it the synagogue? Is it the temple? Where is the nation-building of this country? And then we're comparing ourselves as we're Canadians. We know what the US is like and their pride, but where's the Canadian pride? We need you; we need these students. We need these students to go with other students and tell them about this. We need these best teachers. We need the best that you have to offer in religious terms, whether it's the Talmud, whether it's the Koran, whether it's the Bible. In any case, we need you to build a new

Canada. And what you are doing, in a way—and you correct me, if I'm wrong—is you're taking some of the best away to build a great country, together.

Some of these students are coming here, like Mr. Klees has indicated, from other countries. Who are they together with? As Mr. Fonseca says in his resolution, if we're taking out \$500 million from the school system, where some of the schools are literally falling apart—if we're taking that away from them, my friends, that's not the very best idea. That's what the research has indicated today.

My friends, to make a long story short, the best indicator of a successful student, a successful future, is self-worth. I know that private schools and faith-based schools are providing that. I know where you're at. You know in your heart that you want to create successful students for a new Canada; I know you want to do that. But you have to share it with the rest of us. I know that can be done.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's a pleasure to stand and speak to the resolution from my colleague from Mississauga East, and I'll speak in favour of it.

I thought about this and I thought: What happens in schools? Are we there just to learn subjects? Are we there to learn our arithmetic, our algebra, our geometry, our geography? We're not. That's certainly a part of it. A lot of what we're tested on is how much of the curriculum goes into our heads, sticks in our heads and comes out in a coherent form. But a lot of the value of education happens in what we learn about each other and how we learn to live together. In Ontario, we have an experiment called the multicultural society. It's an experiment in how to get along, how to live among one another and how to break down barriers instead of, consciously or unconsciously, wilfully or otherwise, erect them, tolerate them or see them exist. That's perhaps one of the major reasons I've seen the value in a public education system, which is, to me, the one single, shared experience that 97% of Ontario students all have. By the time they come out, they've studied, lived, played and experienced among their peers from every walk of life, from every country on earth, from every socioeconomic status, and it's something that we value in Ontario; it's something that is Ontario.

It has been a tendency in parliamentary democracies of every stripe to have four pillars of a parliamentary democracy: government, the judiciary, the media and the church. As our democracies have evolved, we have not pushed those four pillars together. We have normally moved them apart. Just like a table is more stable the further apart its legs are than the closer together its legs are, so too is our democracy. I have some problems in pushing together government and the church, especially as regards faith-based education.

I'll say this as a Roman Catholic: When I went to school—and I didn't go to elementary school in Ontario; I went in Quebec—an education was an education. It didn't matter whether you got it in a classroom that had a cross in it or in a classroom that didn't; it didn't matter

whether you got it in a public school or a Catholic school. It was your education. That's something that public education offers: It offers a shared experience.

This is not a bill; this is a resolution. This is a good time for the opposite views in the spectrum to be heard. It's not a judgment on faith-based education, as I thought I heard my colleague from Oak Ridges assert, but it is an opportunity to affirm our belief in public education. It's fine to be passionate. In fact, this is the place to be passionate. After having been sent here by the men and the women who vote in your riding, if you can't come in here and be passionate, then where can you? But to me, "passion" means "be hard on the issue but go easy on the people." There is no particular reason to cast aspersions on the motives or the integrity of the member from Mississauga East any more than on the very articulate people who spoke against him. They're skilled people, they're good legislators and, if I may say, across the party barriers, in many cases, they are also our friends.

1100

To conclude, Ontario was the first place in the whole world to make public education not merely universal but compulsory. What happens, then, if Ontario should change its mind about that? Would it indeed, as my predecessor once observed, create a crisis? What happens when students begin to leave the education system? We've seen the opposite as the education system has gotten better. People have voted with their feet. In Mississauga, where I'm from, we've seen places—and I'm just going use one example because my time is running out: Cawthra Park and Oscar Peterson. Excellent music programs; people have gravitated to them. Public education and its value has spoken for itself.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mississauga East, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Fonseca: I'd like to thank all my colleagues in this House who have spoken to this resolution: the members for Oak Ridges, Trinity-Spadina, Guelph-Wellington, Erie-Lincoln, Davenport and Mississauga West.

This resolution is about our commitment to continuing along the path we are going with increased funding to public education. We've seen 28% in increased funding—\$18.3 billion; the fixing of our schools' infrastructure, with new boilers, roofs, windows—a \$1-billion investment has been put into that; and approximately 100 new schools on top of the 200 we had already opened over the last three and a half years.

We cannot afford to take \$500 million out of our system. What would it cost? Seven million per school board. That works out to \$100,000 less per school, \$4,190 less per teacher, and \$263 less per student. That means that what we've done in terms of bringing down class sizes in grade 3—93% of our schools now have 23 or fewer students. That means better learning, more attention, better test scores and higher graduation rates. This is where we want to go.

We can't afford, as the Conservative Party and Mr. Tory would like, to bring forward this cut to the public school system. It would cost us 7,600 new support staff.

We cannot afford this. We cannot afford to go back to lost school days, to underfunding, to an undermining of our public education system.

PROTECTION OF MINORS
IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007
SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS
PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

Mr. Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 201, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports / Projet de loi 201, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs qui participent à des sports amateurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Ouellette, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I start, I'd just say so long Staucha, old friend.

I'll give a bit of background. At the start, I must emphasize the fact that there are thousands or tens of thousands of coaches and volunteers participating in activities, and they do a fantastic job. They do it because they have a passion for it and they really contribute to our community. But once in a while some things slip through the cracks, and that's what we're going to try to address here today.

I worked with Hockey Canada and they did a great job, as well as the Ontario Minor Hockey Association. I think I should start right from the beginning of what took place. For those who don't know, I coach kids' hockey and I've been doing it for seven, eight years. As a requirement for that, the hockey league, as a result of what took place with Sheldon Kennedy—all coaches, managers and trainers have a criminal investigation report, or as the police call it, a vulnerable persons check. And I didn't have a problem with that. The cost is about \$10 for a volunteer and \$20 for a paid individual at the local police department.

About two and a half years ago, an individual at the rink came to me and he said, "You see that individual out there reffing?" I said, "Yes." He said, "That person shouldn't be out there with kids." I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "I can't tell you, Mr. Ouellette, because of my job, but I have to let you know that that individual, in no way, shape or form, should be with kids and associated at all."

So I did a background check and found out that this particular referee had multiple sex convictions, as was explained to me. Then I started doing some research and found out that referees or officials did not require vulnerable persons checks in order to be out there.

Now, as a coach, I instill respect for referees. Refs don't have direct contact with kids off the ice. However, if one of those refs said to one of the kids on my team, "I

need to talk to you before this game"—and the way the arenas are set up, sometimes there are opportunities for that sort of thing—that kid would have went with that ref. Not only that, but most people don't realize that refs in hockey can start at the age of 14. So a 14-year-old could be in an enclosed change room with this particular sex offender, unbeknown to that 14-year-old.

So we started doing checks and found out, as I stated, that there was no requirement for refs. I dealt with Hockey Canada and the Ontario Minor Hockey Association and they did a great job on this. Hockey Canada explained to me that there are about 12 to 15 various hockey organizations in the province of Ontario. So we checked and the Ontario Minor Hockey Association saw the need, understood it and implemented a policy last fall to do this, so that vulnerable persons checks or criminal investigation reports were submitted by refs.

The difficulty was that when we started checking with the other leagues, we found that there was no consistency throughout the province. Some leagues responded to us and others did not, and we found out that some required coaches, managers, trainers and refs to have checks and some did not. So then I started dealing with them to see what we could do about moving it forward.

I then approached the great workers in the research department here at Queen's Park and discussed bringing a bill forward. At that time, they asked me, "Well, do you want to limit it to hockey or not?" I said, "Let's take a look and see." So through the research department, we contacted Baseball Ontario, Team Ontario Baseball, Basketball Ontario, Ontario Tackle Football, Touch Football Ontario, Alliance Hockey, the Greater Toronto Hockey League, Hockey Northwestern Ontario, Northern Ontario Hockey Association, Ontario Hockey Association, Ontario Hockey Federation, Ontario Hockey League, Ontario Minor Hockey Association, Ontario Women's Hockey Association, Ottawa District Hockey Association, Ontario Lacrosse, Ontario Ringette Association, Ontario Rugby Union, Ontario Soccer Association, Ontario Amateur Softball Association and Softball Ontario. The result was that for those who contacted us back, there was inconsistency in policy. Some of these associations required coaches, managers, trainers and officials to have vulnerable persons checks and some did not.

From that, we decided that, quite possibly in the best interests of all kids in the province of Ontario, and having had that exposed to me—as I came in here, I spoke to one of the officials here at Queen's Park who happens to be a referee as well, and he started to explain about a situation that he came across as well. When you start hearing these stories coming out, you find that there has to be some consistency throughout the province.

So we approached the legal department here at Queen's Park and we incorporated all those blanket policies, or the ones that were implementing a policy. What I mean by that is that some groups—with the Ontario Minor Hockey Association, I have to get a vulnerable persons or a criminal investigation report on an

annual basis. Some of the other ones have it done every four years. We've included that so that these associations that have a policy that says, "You only have to have one every four years"—to see that that continues on. Except for a new individual entering the process, they have to have it, and there are some timelines and guidelines for this check.

The question is, what happens or what takes place as a result of this? I had some questions from the press on this yesterday: "How does it work? What takes place?" Effectively, what happens is, a person says, "I want to coach, train, manage, referee in this particular organization." They are then instructed to get a criminal investigation report or a vulnerable persons check from the police department. They go down to the police department—in the case of the region of Durham, it's \$10 for a volunteer and \$20 for an individual who's paid—and the police would then do a criminal investigation report, mail it back to you, and you would take that to the league. The league executive reviews it and says yea or nay.

What we're doing here is—we're not going to catch all the individuals, only the ones who have been caught. But what happens is, we send a strong message to those individuals out there who are looking, who are watching, who are doing stuff with kids, like this particular individual who was on the ice at that time, and say, "We're watching you. We're going to keep an eye on you."

Since then, we've received information from a number of different organizations, such as the Ontario sport organization council. It's a provincial body that deals with sport. They've contacted us in full support, and I'd be happy to provide any of the information. But they said it doesn't go far enough. They asked about other vulnerable individuals, such as disabled individuals or seniors as well?" Our response was that we needed to start somewhere. I saw the immediate need with the research I had done on policies for everyone under the age of 18, so that it takes into consideration all the kids. And, yes, we can look at that, but once we implement this policy, quite possibly some other things like that may come into play. Not only that, but other organizations such as the directors of Basketball Ontario requested that Volunteer Canada's Safe Steps screening program become a mandate of the organization. This will require that a police records check take place of all the officials in Basketball Ontario. So there are a number of organizations that are seeing this need and working towards it.

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Other areas of concern are the cost and the fact that some people say that some volunteers may not be willing to participate because of this extra burden. Yes, there was an initial response when I was first asked to get this background, but quite frankly, afterwards, when you see your kids out there, aged five, six, seven, eight—and my kids; Garrett is 10 and Josh is 11 now—I don't see how we cannot do due diligence to make sure that these individuals are not participating in those sports.

As I mentioned earlier, there are a lot of other sports out there, such as hockey, where you can start to ref at

14—and soccer and some of the other ones out there. There is an exemption in there, because according to the Young Offenders Act they can't provide information for anybody up to the age of 18, which is acceptable. Some people say, "Well, it doesn't get everybody because of that aspect." No, you have to start somewhere, and we have to look at the best interests of all the kids in Ontario.

We certainly hope that this sends a strong message to those associations to look at getting a policy in place. We are receiving support from a number of organizations that have come forward and said yes. But quite frankly, a lot of people out there are saying, "You mean it's not happening already?" They didn't know that these checks weren't in place. Some people are saying, "How does it work for a house league? We are there in a house league. Rep hockey I can understand, or soccer or any of the rep sports, because they're travelling all over, but in a house league?" Well, I have to tell you, once in a while we are rushing to events, we're doing things, we're dropping kids off and leaving them in the trust of the soccer coach during the soccer game, and of the other parents who are there, in the same fashion that other parents do it with us, and it works quite well. Not only that, but a lot of times it's the same individuals who coach hockey, who coach lacrosse, who coach soccer. The one check would be applicable to those. All they would need to do would be to say, "This is how many copies of this I would need for each of these various locations." And the police provide that on a regular basis, so a one-time fee. The cost—a lot of the times in a house league, when I was with the house league team, the park actually covered the cost, and when I coached rep hockey, it was the team that covered the cost. So the cost was not an overbearing issue.

I am hoping that the House would look at this and send it to committee so that we can have these organizations come forward, because I believe this is a strong step forward in protecting a lot of the kids in the province. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): It's a privilege to speak to this bill. I am in support, and so is the New Democratic Party. Anything that makes Ontario safer for our children is something that we should all be supporting, and I hope that we all will this morning.

It certainly is apropos that we have children present, because we're talking about their futures and their safety. And it's certainly apropos that our pages, who are also young people, are listening to this debate. It's an important one.

I hope to speak about many ways in which we could make Ontario a much safer province for all of our children. I welcome the member from Oshawa's comments, his experience. This tightens up a loophole—wonderful work. I am happy and would urge that this go to committee.

There are just a few little flags I want to note before I go on to talk about children's safety generally, and they come from charitable organizations that already have this in place. In particular, in my own experience with it as a

pastor in a church, and as many people who work in church work and synagogues and other places will know, most of us have policies in place and require that anybody who works with children, who teaches Sunday school etc., has a police check done on them, and done at regular intervals. The problem sometimes is that, for example, in my own church, where maybe a quarter of the congregation has taught Sunday school at some point or other, this becomes an onerous cost. And most of these organizations, I know, bear that cost. So that would be one of the caveats I would like to see addressed, how we mitigate that cost that can become onerous to organizations trying to do the right thing. I know it's not particular to this event. With this bill, we're not talking about that many people who will be covered by this, and it shouldn't make that much of a difference. But I know, in living and working with the system that's already in place for many organizations, that's something that they've come across.

I'm quoting here from CharityVillage NewsWeek at charityvillage.com, a quote that I think points to the broader issue: "Roy Bergerman agrees that criminal record checks are only a part of the education and screening process. 'It's not the ones that have criminal records for abusing kids that we are worried about because they are not likely to apply. It's the ones that we don't know about, or who don't have criminal records, that we have to protect the kids from.'" And that's what I'm going to be talking about.

Before I leave that particular topic of volunteer organizations, though, and the protection of children, I do want to say that there was a recent news article, on March 13 of this year. Durham raised their fee to \$20. Again, we need some sensitivity around how much these police checks cost and who's going to bear the brunt of it. Certainly many organizations have said it is a bit of a deterrent for low-income earners to go out and get those, if they're required to do so, and it can be a deterrent for organizations. So if this bill goes to committee—and I hope it does—please look at that issue.

Onward in terms of the broader issue of safety for children in this province: There was a recent study done by children's aid societies, and they asked people across Ontario—it was a fairly large sample—how many people would report child abuse if they knew about it going on, and 87% of them said that they knew it was their duty to report child abuse. So I hope anybody listening to or watching this knows that, that it is the duty of every adult and, for that matter, every young person to report child abuse if they know that it is occurring.

The problem came in how many said they actually would report the abuse, and then that figure dramatically declined to just over 50%. The reasons given for not reporting it were that often they knew the person who was the perpetrator, and they wouldn't report on someone they knew. There were also genuine concerns for the children, who often were dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. That was another concern. And, finally, they didn't know who to report to. They didn't know

where they should go with this information, who to call with this information, who would do something about it, or what the ramifications would be on them. Many of them did not know that you can do this anonymously. So that's really important information, and important information that we need to put out there.

It was interesting. One of the things I did in researching this was that I went on a website and I said, "I am being abused," just typed it in, thinking, "What would a child do if they were being abused and they wanted to reach out for help?" Interestingly enough, BC came up, a wonderful website—bang. Kids Help Line came up; kudos to them. That was it. And then there was tons and tons of information that a child would never be able to get through. There was no immediate help available on the Net, and we know that most of our children are now Net-savvy.

The other problem is that of course most of the abuse that is perpetrated upon our children is done by somebody they know, and know well. That's the problem. Of 8,800 charges in the 2002 study that was the most extensive I could find, a third of them involved family members, direct family members. Only 29% of those attacks upon children were non-relatives or were not close family friends; 81% of them were upon young girls. And I know that as an adult woman, when you start talking to your other women friends, the incidence of abuse, of course, is usually twice as high as that which is reported and twice as high as that which is prosecuted. So we're talking about a huge number of abuse cases across this province and across this country. This is a shame.

Again, how do we keep the children of Ontario safer? That's what we're all concerned with here. One might suggest that a way of doing this is to make the reporting easier. Those front-line early warning detection people like parents, teachers, other parents, other children—we have to inform them much, much better than we are doing now as to what to do when this is happening, and give them easy access to those systems and people who will be able to help them. So, again, just to call out, because there is a huge problem and we are not addressing it in this province.

How do we want to make Ontario safer for children? An even bigger problem. Campaign 2000, a wonderful organization formed in 1987—all the federal political parties signed on to it. They wanted to make child poverty history by the year 2000. All of the political parties signed that agreement. This is now a black mark upon us all.

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There is no doubt, because here we are in the year 2007 and child poverty in this province is worse than ever: One in six of our children are poor; 15% to 17% of people in the province of Ontario are poor; 38% of those children who are poor come from working families. We know that poverty is one of the red flags when it comes to all sorts of other problems that plague children's lives. If we have children who are using food banks and their parents are using food banks, these are vulnerable

children in precarious situations. That is the situation in this province.

We are overlooking a way of making Ontario safer for children in not dealing with child poverty, not having a structure to deal with child poverty. We have not ended the clawback of the national child supplement. This would give those who are on social assistance—many of them single women, many of them working single women with children—an extra \$122 a month immediately. We haven't done that. In fact, the \$250 that they got in this Liberal budget isn't enough to pay for the Minister of Finance's shoes as he stood up and announced it. They cost \$256. I love that little factoid: \$250 for the poorest children, \$256 for the Minister of Finance's shoes.

We don't have housing for our families. We have 122,000 households waiting for affordable housing. This makes life precarious for our poorest children. There is a way of making Ontario safer for children: actually building the housing that was promised in 2003. We have a resolution: Build the 20,000 units of affordable housing. Have we? No, not even close. Even by their own estimates, not even a third of that number.

Of course—my favourite—we could raise the minimum wage now to \$10 an hour, not three years from now, because that's the low-income cut-off. Below that, you are poor. So if we actually paid a living wage to those who work, then maybe their children wouldn't be left with strangers, wouldn't be left in precarious situations, wouldn't be at risk as much as they are now when we are not paying a living wage.

Talking about child care, there's something we could do to make this province safer for children. The \$25 million that was announced for child care is actually a quarter of what this government gets from the federal government for child care. It's certainly way, way less than the \$300 million that was promised in 2003. If we had good child care, our children would be safer. As I visit homes in my riding, I visit apartments where two families are living in one bedroom, where one mother will take all the children in from a number of different apartments and the child care consists of sitting and watching the television all day. That's all the parents can afford. These are children at risk—and there are thousands of them across this province. We are at fault—all of us—in not making sure that that happens.

I call upon this government to do the right thing: to make Ontario safer for children by addressing that very real risk factor in this province which is child poverty.

Early warning systems—teachers. Where do we first see children at risk? Well, right now there's a wonderful system of detecting children at risk early, that is, before they start into the regular school system. Those are called, in my riding and in others, the parenting and family literacy programs that are part of our school system now.

These are open to families with children, new immigrants, others. Many, many poor families use these centres. They're wonderful. During literacy week, I had

the marvellous opportunity to go and visit and read to the children in all of the centres. I want to mention the ones that are in my riding. There is one at Indian Road Crescent Junior Public School, there's one at Queen Victoria Public School and there's one at Parkdale Junior Public School as well. All of these parenting and family literacy programs are at risk under this present government.

What do they cost? They cost one salary—\$35,000 a year—for each centre, and a free room provided by the school. They are such a little part of the budget and yet they are all at risk. I have delivered a stack of letters from people who take part in parenting and family literacy programs to the Minister of Education. I don't believe she's answered one of them yet. These are threatened with closure by the end of this year unless some funding comes their way. So there's an early warning detection system for abusive situations that we are about to lose. Every teacher will tell you this—anybody who has been in the educational system will tell you—that they're often the first ones who are privy to the knowledge of abuse happening in the home. We're taking this valuable resource away.

You heard in the prior debate a great deal of talk about funding the public school system, and of course that's part of it. We need enough teachers and educational assistants, enough people, to be able to get to know the children in the public school system so that they might know what's going on in their lives in a real, real way.

Just to recap, do I support Bill 201 and the member from Oshawa? Absolutely. I'd support—and so would we in the New Democratic Party—anything that makes this a safer province for our children. I know there are limitations upon what you can do with this, but it still needs to be done. It still needs to go to committee. We can make it stronger and tougher in committee, and we should do that. Then we should do so much more. We should have a system, a simple system, for children to access on the Internet. Might I even suggest to the government, famous for their websites, that they do a good website where children, if they're being abused, could immediately find help on the website? If someone was looking to help a child being abused, they could immediately find help there. An early warning system like that would help.

Keeping our parent and family literacy programs open so that children have access to the educational system and their parents and friends of their parents have access there, at the earliest stages; and child care: if we had a publicly funded child care system so that parents didn't have to leave their children in precarious situations—parents who don't have the money to find better child care and who have to work. These are the children most at risk—poor children. They are children at risk, indeed, across the province. We could also provide families across the province who live in poverty, and therefore their children live at higher risk, with a decent income, a minimum wage that they could sustain themselves on and pay the rent and feed themselves on. We could build the

housing units that these children need, which were promised in 2003 but never delivered. We could end the clawback of the national child supplement; \$122 dollars a month to the poorest children—it goes directly to the children in this province—is being clawed back by this government, and it hasn't ended with this budget, much to the ballyhoo to the contrary. That's something we could do to help our poorest children.

We could have an anti-poverty strategy in this province, just like Ireland does and many other jurisdictions, to combat poverty once and for all. I'm happy to support this bill. I would be happy if our children across Ontario were not at risk, but I fear that under the current administration they are very much so. This bill, although a small step, goes at least a small step in the direction of making them safer.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I'm going to do something a little different, and I beg your indulgence on this. I want to talk directly as our young kids are leaving. Guys, I want you to make sure at all times that nobody touches you improperly. You know this. You've been taught this. Do not allow anyone to say anything or do anything to you that you know you're not supposed to have happen to you. You are the people we are talking about today. I want to thank all of you for coming. I also want to thank the teachers, the sports coaches, the referees and the people who take care of our young people. The very vast majority of them love you very much, but there are some who do not. There are some who are called "predators." These predators are really tricky people. They're sick. They do tricks to you. They try to convince you that it's okay to do things; it's not. So I'm going to ask you to remember those wonderful people who are surrounding you with love: your parents, your family members, the coaches, those people who take care of you. They are trying to teach you ways to keep yourselves safe.

That's what we're talking about today, that bill. This wonderful bill that's being presented to us today in private members' time is to make it even better; it's to try to improve it even more to keep you safe and secure. But you are the front line. You're the ones who can tell these predators, "No." Remember that. Thanks very much for being here, guys. Take care of yourselves, okay?

1130

Mr. Ouellette, I want to thank you very much for bringing this bill forward. It's the right thing to do, it's appropriate, and so I support your bill. I think it's a great bill. It talks to us about exactly what you've had to experience as a coach and what I have experienced as a coach over 25 years in various sports. The unfortunate issue is that we're talking about predators. That's whom we're talking about, very specifically.

It's unfortunate that one of the members here has decided to say that the glass is empty instead of half full, at least. Let's make it three quarters full together. Let's work together on making sure our kids are safe. That is what we're dedicated to do. That's what our challenge is.

What do you want to do in this bill? You want to do in this bill a very simple step, and I think you would

acknowledge that it is a simple step, but we need to engage this into our community. We need to entrench this into a normal practice. The normal practice is to ensure that those people who are charged with taking care of our children, and the good ones—the good ones, and I know you will agree with this, will welcome the checks. They welcome the ways. But do you know what else happens? It's the trickery. It's the knowledge base that we have about how these predators operate. They're very, very crafty. They're sneaky, they're devious and they're wicked. Unfortunately, they're still infiltrating our system.

I compliment the member for taking the steps to do exactly what I know he's asking us to do: to consider the next steps of how we lock the door on these evil people. The things that they do are evil, and we need to make sure that we send that message loud and clear. We're coming to get you, we're closing the door, we're locking it and we're throwing away the key, because we don't want our children subjected to the things you want to subject them to.

So the message should go out loud and clear, and I want to compliment all of the organizations that have from time immemorial—and I have been involved in coaching for 25 years and a little bit longer than that, actually, that those steps are engaged in as often as is possible.

I do agree with the member when he talks to us about—you know what? Most of the organizations will pick up the tab on that. They don't want to put the extra burden of cost onto the individual. Of the organizations that I have been involved with, they've all picked up the tab. I think it has escalated a little bit. If I'm not mistaken, the average cost is somewhere around \$20 to \$25. In some areas it's a little bit more, but it's between \$10 and \$25. If it has to come to this, yup, you have to pay it out of your pocket, because I want those kids safe. But on the good side to this, most of the organizations pick that up.

I want to compliment the member for bringing this subject forward. I personally think, because it is private members' time and it's not time to take a whack at anybody other than to say, "Is this a good bill or a bad bill?" that this a tremendous bill and I thank the member for bringing it forward. I thank him for his dedication in coaching and to the many people in this House who dedicate themselves to coaching and working with young kids too.

Quite frankly, our First Nations people say is very brilliantly: seven generations. We're working towards presenting our future for seven generations, and what we do today is the signal to whom we talk about seven generations from now. We want to know that the people in this room supported that bill, and we want to know that the progressive thinking that's happening in this House during private members' time, particularly with this bill, is taking place.

I compliment the member and I will be supporting him 100%. Thank you very much for bringing the bill forward.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I want to thank my seatmate and member for Oshawa for bringing this forward, and also thank the previous two speakers for their support on this bill.

This is such an important issue. It's one that seems to have slipped by some very clever people who are conscientious in their community and people who are aware of the need to protect children. Yet I think it's something we all took for granted and thought it was happening anyway. As a parent, and I would like to say as Mrs. Coach for many years, probably 25 years, I too thought that anybody coming in contact with our children was screened. I didn't realize that the screening happened at different levels and that different organizations and municipalities did their screening in different ways.

I think this is a breath of fresh air, that it's come forward, and that we have the opportunity to make something right, something even safer for our children. There is no guarantee in life on anything. But when we're faced with the ability and the opportunity to make something better, it is our obligation and—in fact, I think the member from Parkdale–High Park used the words—our duty to do so. That's what we can do with this bill.

As many risks as we can reduce for our children, we add to the success of their future. Growing up is an increasingly difficult thing to do today. Young people are faced with more violence, young people are faced with more isolation, and it is an environment that presents many challenges. Sometimes our children react in a way that they gravitate towards actions that look like acceptance. With this bill going forward, it removes yet one more way in which kids at risk feel they can be accepted by a predator.

Our children naturally look to adults as their role models, especially adults who have authoritative positions. They place a lot of trust in them, and it's blind trust. They really think that because there is a coach or there is a referee, that is the person they look up to: teachers, doctors, parents. Whatever we can do to ensure that that trust is well placed is what we must do. We must ensure that all adults who come in contact with children through sports organizations, through any organizations, are screened in a way that reduces the risk and takes away the opportunity for these kids to be hurt.

We thought we had it covered, but obviously we didn't. Our residents look to us to ensure public safety in every way, and especially for one of the most vulnerable segments of our population, a segment that, as I said, blindly trusts us on a daily basis. We are nurturers of our children. We look after our children. We provide for the success, the happiness and the health in their future. This bill is a logical progression of what exists today. What it will also do is create some predictability and evening out of the playing field across all organizations.

A tightening up of the screening that already takes place is something that is a wise thing to do. We shouldn't just accept that what happened 10 years and 20 years ago is still relevant today. The bill moves towards filling in the gaps that exist in screening across these

various organizations. Given that there is no financial consequence to the organizations, there are opportunities for corporations to want to sponsor programs like this, to say that XYZ corporation sponsors the screening program for the baseball organizations in a particular community. I think that's something that could catch on very quickly.

We have an opportunity today to safeguard yet further our children and help them understand that they have a responsibility in the future to safeguard future generations. We ought to accept our duty, our obligation and our responsibility. We have the authority to do it and we should move forward.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It is indeed a pleasure to stand up and support my friend from Oshawa on this important bill that he brought forward. I could make my speech really short by saying “ditto” to all the non-partisan comments that were made in this House. Some of the stuff is going to be repetitious, but that's not a bad thing, because the more we talk about it, the more we instill what we believe in.

First of all, I think it's an opportune time to congratulate and thank not only the member from Oshawa but all his coaching friends across this province, across this country, and when I say “coach,” I mean all those folks involved in minor sports, whether it be a trainer, a referee, a volunteer, or a fundraiser who gives a lot of their time. For a number of years, my wife and I lived in an arena; I thought that was our home. I coached maybe not as long as my friend from Oshawa—I think it was four or five years—but I helped out driving kids to hockey games and to soccer. So that sometimes becomes not our second home but our first home. And I must say, I enjoyed every minute of it and I kind of miss it, but I'm picking it up with my grandkids. I have three grandkids—well, I have seven grandkids, but three are of the age when they start playing sports, and it brings back some great memories.

1140

Back to the bill: I too wonder what the other 37 Parliaments before of us did. Why didn't one of them realize that this wasn't the law in the province of Ontario? I'm sure they cared about kids as much as we do, but it just makes you wonder how these things fall through the cracks.

I heard this morning some comments that this creates a cost. Well, if I was involved—and I know many people are involved in minor sports. If we have nothing to hide, what's 10, 20 bucks? What is \$10 or \$20 in today's world? If you've got nothing to hide, let's make sure that the people we want to help become better citizens are protected.

I come from a small community, and we know most of the people, so that's the other argument: “Do we suspect somebody?” I mean, we know. Our families grew for years in those communities, at least in small, rural communities. But I too must confess that sometimes, while sitting in one of those arenas or on the sidelines of a soccer field or waiting for the kids to go up to bat, some-

body will whisper in my ear, "Did you hear that so and so might be?" I'm sure it's just a rumour, but it instills that thought in your mind so that when you go home, whether it's your kids or the kids you are coaching, the next time you're on that playing field or that arena, you stare at that person. Wouldn't it be nice if we didn't have to worry about that? Even if they are squeaky clean, it's just the thought, and then if a rumour spreads within your hockey team or your soccer team, it's even worse.

So, yes, it is a small step, but I'm not sure that—how can I put it? Every needle in the haystack makes a difference. It doesn't matter how small it is. Even the fact that a person who could be a predator has the knowledge that we're watching—it's just like when I drive down the highway every day and I know there's a police cruiser down the road: I look at my speedometer. It's not that I'm speeding, but I look at my speedometer. So just knowing the fact that there is a law, there is a rule, there is somebody watching—I think that in itself plays a big role.

When the time comes today, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to tell you that as a parent, a grandparent, and someone who's been involved with kids all my life, we need to act on anything that protects vulnerable kids, so I'll be more than happy to support this bill.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I want to say that I support this wholeheartedly. Mr. Ouellette, the member for Oshawa, brings forward a private member's bill that looks to protect our most vulnerable: our kids. We must make sure that they are in safe environments, that they are protected.

Having been involved in sport all my life, as a participant, as a coach—and actually being married to a coach; my wife is the head coach of the Oakville Aquatic Club and the president of the Canadian Swimming Coaches Association—I find myself immersed in sport. I always think about sport as a great place. Sport and recreation is a place where kids, young adults come to play, come to learn, come to participate, and they do come in a very open sense. They see it as a non-threatening environment—an environment where they are passionate about something, enjoy something, the camaraderie with their friends.

When we discuss coaches, trainers, people who are around our kids, those relationships can be very close. I know I've had very close relationships with all my coaches, trainers, helpers, volunteers, judges etc. who are involved in sport. You have two individuals who are very passionate about what they're doing when we look at hockey or swimming or track. In sport, there's often very close contact. You look at gymnastics: A trainer, a coach, has to be right there with their athletes. They have to be observing for many reasons—to make them better, for improvements—but they also have to be there for the safety aspect when they're doing particular moves or flips or whatever it may be. We want to make sure that those people who are there working with our kids, who are giving so much of their time—we also have to commend the coaches, the trainers, the volunteers, everybody

who gives up hundreds of hours of their time to the betterment of our communities and those kids.

At the same time, Mr. Ouellette, the member for Oshawa, brings up a private member's bill that addresses a hole that we have in our system, where we have to do background checks, we have to do criminal checks. I know in my wife's club, within their policies and procedures, they do checks on all their volunteers. Everybody who works with the kids has to go through a check.

I did speak to the provincial sport organization body. They did bring forward some of their comments and said that they are in support of this bill, but they would like to see it furthered, even bettered.

I'll talk about the criminal checks. The criminal record checks often do not provide an accurate assessment of someone's suitability or provide a complete criminal history, and that's what we want: a complete criminal history. They bring about that a criminal record check from the local police detachment may only capture criminal convictions within that particular jurisdiction. If a person moves from town to town—and we know these predators are very savvy—they would leave a trail of convictions that may not be disclosed. We have to make sure that we close that hole also, I say to Mr. Ouellette.

Bill 201 also does not require a criminal record check that includes the CPIC, the Canadian Police Information Centre, a check that would capture all criminal convictions cross the country. I think this would be very important because we do hear about cases where somebody has been hurt by another in a sport or recreational setting and it is somebody who has moved from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Also, criminal record checks do not capture dropped charges, investigations of criminal behaviour or other such areas that are captured by vulnerable sector checks.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join in the debate with respect to Bill 201, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports, from my colleague from Oshawa.

This past year I was involved in my son's hockey in the Barrie Minor Hockey Association and was a goalie coach. We were required to obtain not only the licensing you require and certificates from the Ontario Minor Hockey Association, but there are information sessions with respect to a code of conduct for that organization, and also the mandatory police record check, for which the individual pays. So in the Barrie Minor Hockey Association, they certainly have a policy of ensuring that background checks are conducted, and I have first-hand experience of that.

1150

I want to talk about the bill because I'm just looking at it from a legal point of view, and I think this might be instructive to my friend in terms of what my thoughts are. I think it's more of maybe a philosophical point of view, in terms of when I think these things should be done, as opposed to anything else.

First of all, looking at section 2 of the act, which is a punishable offence under this legislation, and section 2 is under "Obligations; requirement for criminal record

check." The requirement for that criminal record check has a time frame that my colleague has put out.

First of all, 2(1)(a) says, "no earlier than four years before the day on which the program begins and no later than the day on which the program begins," the organization "has requested in writing a copy of the criminal record" check. So there's a request in writing.

Then you go to (b). It says, "no earlier than four years before the day on which the program begins and no later than 90 days after the day on which the program begins, has obtained...."

I guess my issue on that is a matter of drafting and also timing. I would think that in terms of protecting young children—my son was eight when he played last year, and there are younger kids who get involved in organized sports; they get started in the Barrie area as young as four—you would require that that police record check be done, in terms of a request form, and obtained before that program begins. That would be my suggestion in terms of making sure that this is done and making sure, before any person gets involved in that program, that they've done their police record check.

It's not a very difficult process. You go down to the police station in Barrie, you fill out the form, you give them the money and it's done fairly expeditiously because they know it's a serious issue. They know that it needs to be done for the sports program to function smoothly and make sure that all the parents are comfortable with whoever's chosen to be on the coaching staff of that organization.

Certainly, there are stringent rules within the Barrie Minor Hockey Association in terms of access and dealing with a child. It's frowned upon and prohibited for you to be alone with a child without there being another witness, whether they're in the dressing room or outside of the rink or whatever, in terms of if it's involved in the activity of that club. So, those types of restrictions are important—not only that there's a witness there but, as everybody knows, a policy is fantastic, but if it's not followed, then it's a problem.

That's another aspect of the bill that I want to deal with, because I think my friend is being fairly generous in terms of his requirement for this test to be done. That's under section 3, which again is a punishable offence. Section 3 is "Frequency for criminal record checks." What has been put under subsection 3(1) is that the organizer may participate at least every four years in this process. But my friend goes on to say that in subsection (2) they can request a copy of a criminal record check more frequently.

I would think that I would be looking to change that, to require that this is done annually—whenever you're going to get people involved in the program and they want to be involved in the program, that record checks are done annually. I don't think it's satisfactory to say that you can do it every four years. Responsible organizations would see that it should be done. We're putting out prescriptive law here with respect to the frequency, and I think it should be tightened. I think it should be much tighter. I think it should be done annually. I think if

you want to be involved, then you get your police record check done, because things happen. I think it's important.

There's one gap here in the bill which has not been addressed: What happens if you go get your police record check done and you pass it and you get charged after that during the year and you get convicted? How does that reconcile with respect to what you're trying to accomplish here? Or if an individual is charged after the fact and convicted, and maybe just minimally charged, how do we deal with that? Obviously, that circumstance has changed. I don't know how organizations deal with that. I know my friend Jerry Ouellette is very knowledgeable in this area. What is the policy? How do you deal with an individual who has been criminally charged and convicted during the time that they are in the process of coaching your children? There must be a policy in place. Maybe that's something we should be looking at too, because this gives you the clean slate, saying, "Okay, you can go forward." What happens if, during the time that you are in that program, something happens to you in terms of your criminal record?

The other part that I wanted to point out, because I think my friend is being a little bit too nice in this particular area, is section 9, "Offences." Under subsection 9(2), it says that you commit an offence under sections 2 or 3 or subsection 6(6) of the act if you knowingly refrain from getting that record check. That imputes knowledge, and I think the standard should be higher because we're dealing with our children here. Negligence may not be an appropriate standard, because organizations get all kinds of information in and someone might have missed something. But to impute knowledge where the organization should be organized and able to do this, allows them to be sloppy, in my view. Gross negligence might be too high a standard also. There has to be some kind of level of standard for conviction where the organization knows that they have to do their job and that if they have a system in place and they do their job, they can be able to say, "Listen, we did everything that we possibly could to make sure. We did the record check. We had the systems in place. Don't look at us as an organization." You may be able to point your finger at an individual and say, "that individual." That may be the test for an individual in terms of their knowledge, but for an organization—it's a big organization. My friend may want to look at the Occupational Health and Safety Act, where they have language in there in terms of what constitutes an offence, where the defence of due diligence is available for an organization to defend themselves. In other words, if it happens that the record check wasn't done, then that's what we call the *actus reus*; they've done the act. That's the first test in what the crown would have to prove that the act occurred. But the defence would be not pure *mens rea*, which is knowledge. It would be something lesser in terms of the defence of due diligence in saying, "Listen, we did what we had to do, and this is our defence to the fact that we didn't get that record check done."

I look forward to this bill going to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Ouellette, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ouellette: I want to thank the members for Parkdale–High Park, Brant, Burlington, Northumberland, Mississauga East and Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford for their comments. I think I'll start at the last speaker and see what time I have.

This morning I was volunteering at the kiss-and-ride at the school. Last night, before the volunteer awards night, I was at the rink with my son in hockey. The member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford brought up a couple of issues about the 90-day aspect and the delayed period of time. The reason for that was because I found that last year at the Durham Regional Police Service, there was about a 60-day time frame where they couldn't get the information back to somebody, so we allowed a small grace period in there so that somebody applying—and for those teams that try out in the spring for the fall, it's okay, but for those kids who come out in the fall and they need coaches right away, they needed a bit of a grace period, so that's why we put in that time frame to make it allowable.

The reason we went every four years was because there were some organizations that had a policy in place. The Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League had a policy in place already where every four years—and it was working quite effectively. That's why I allowed for that. In some organizations—yes, the one I'm involved with—it's on an annual basis, but there are some in place already.

The member from Mississauga East spoke about the CPIC check. I dealt with the police—my father was the chief of police. I was under the impression that when they do that check, they run it through CPIC, and that's why I took the 60 days in the region of Durham to get all that information. If it's not, that's one of the inconsistencies that needs to be worked out.

The member from Parkdale–High Park spoke about the cost and, yes, there is a cost in there. However, as the member from Brant mentioned, a lot of the leagues in all of those areas were willing to pick up the cost. Those same checks could apply—because it's a lot of the same people doing hockey, soccer, lacrosse, baseball—and they could be used; they just ask for various copies.

I thank all the members for their comments today.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

EDUCATION FUNDING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall deal first with ballot item number 2, standing in the name of Mr. Fonseca.

Mr. Fonseca has moved private member's notice of motion number 58. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. The motion is lost.

Interjections.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): You guys haven't learned the rules yet?

The Deputy Speaker: Just by way of explanation, you don't just half stand and look around at each other; you stand if you want a division.

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 3, standing in the name of Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Ouellette has moved second reading of Bill 201. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I would ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business now having been dealt with, I do leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1330.

WEARING OF PINS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek the consent of the House for the members, in recognition of the injured workers' day of mourning, to wear the pin signifying the event.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VICTIM SERVICES AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): It was an honour and a pleasure for me to nominate Moonie Ali for the Victim Services Award of Distinction. Today, Moonie and four other individuals received one of these awards in a special ceremony at Queen's Park. I wanted to share with members of this House what inspired me to nominate Moonie.

On August 4, 2003, Moonie's son Terrence was beaten to death in Toronto at the tender age of 15. Left with two children to raise, Moonie chose to transform her anguish, pain and sadness into positives by establishing the Terrence R. Ali Memorial Foundation and working to ensure that one of the three individuals convicted of her son's murder is moved from a youth to adult correctional facility to complete their sentence. Moonie also still finds time to help others who have lost children to senseless violence.

Moonie approaches each and every task of helping victims with great energy, compassion, dedication and conviction. She deserves to be recognized with this award for her selfless efforts on behalf of others, for relentlessly fighting to keep her son's memory alive and for her courage and strength in single-handedly seeking justice for her murdered son. She is a model citizen to all those who have suffered similar tragedies in their lives.

I congratulate Moonie and the other award recipients: Jo-Anne Hughes, Rick Goodwin, Brian Weller and Lynn Zammit. You all help put a face on justice and remind members in this House that in the search for true justice, victims must come first and never be forgotten.

RIDING OF STORMONT-DUNDAS- CHARLOTTENBURGH

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Each year I have the privilege to report on the progress that my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh has made and how we have steadfastly remained focused on our future. I'm proud to share that this optimism is still being realized and rewarded. Our region is feeling steady growth in all sectors of our community. People are seeing results and businesses are consistently prospering.

I would like to profile a community business that embodies the will and the drive of our community. Benson's Autoparts has been supplying consumers throughout the riding and throughout Ontario with quality products and service for many years. They have recently announced the expansion of their warehouse in Cornwall by 70,000 square feet and will be hiring 160 new employees. Not only is this great news for this particular business, it is a perfect example of how the riding is flourishing and continues to showcase its prosperity. Businesses, both large and small, are feeling the benefits both monetarily and also from the support of the citizens and the community organizations they support. In the spirit of this community support and with the success of their business, Benson's has been a proud sponsor of the Children's Treatment Centre in Cornwall, a facility we're all very proud of that is dedicated to assisting victims of child abuse.

We as a government have provided businesses with the encouragement and tools necessary to prosper and be successful in our urban and rural communities. They continue to build, realizing that much more can be done. Benson's Autoparts has a proven track record of growth, expansion and success, and I certainly commend them. The community joins in wishing them the best in the future.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): This morning in the public accounts committee, our party brought forward a motion to have the auditor investigate the McGuinty political slush fund. Liberal members voted it down.

Instead, under the motion they forced through, the Minister of Citizenship will investigate the organizations getting the money and report back in six months, after the election.

The people of Ontario aren't that easily fooled. The questions should have been asked before the cheques were written. That's the problem here—how the money was handed out. The McGuinty government is blaming the organizations that got the money, but the organizations aren't the ones at fault. It was the McGuinty government that didn't have a fair and open application process. It was the McGuinty government that used taxpayers' dollars for a political slush fund. If Dalton McGuinty has nothing to hide, he would want the auditor to investigate. Our motion was fair.

As a member of the public accounts committee, I know how effective the work of the auditor can be. Remember the fraud and mismanagement he found under the ministry for children? He found the trips, the expensive restaurants and the SUVs.

We aren't getting the real answers here. We need a fair, impartial investigation into how the money was handed out. If it isn't a political slush fund, why won't Dalton McGuinty let the auditor investigate?

Even today's Toronto Star editorial supported the auditor investigating. It said, "Taxpayers deserve a complete and immediate accounting of how their money has been used." We agree. That's why we want the Auditor General to investigate this political slush fund.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm speaking in support of the parents of children at Palmerston Avenue public school to express our dismay at and disapproval of the budget cuts that the Toronto District School Board is being forced to make for the 2007-08 school year due to the lack of funding from the McGuinty government.

The budget cuts have reduced the number of education assistant assigned to work with special-education students. In some Palmerston classes, as many as four children are in need of educational assistance and their needs can no longer be met with the reductions.

The loss of educational assistants will be detrimental to all: detrimental to the many children who require in-class assistance, detrimental to the other students and, ultimately, to the teacher, who will be under more stress trying to meet the needs of all of the students without the necessary supports.

"To put a human face on this issue, let us give the example of Madame France Serianni who has worked as a full-time education assistant in special education at Palmerston for 16 years. She is hugely qualified, she knows the students well and has been able to track them, year after year, through their time in school. Perhaps more important, she is fluently bilingual in what is a dual-track school."

And yet her position is being cut.

The parents of children in Palmerston Avenue public school are deeply concerned about the continued decline of the public school system. The parents of Palmerston school are not alone. Our children have the right to the best education the province can provide. The province has a responsibility to properly fund that education.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): This weekend starts Asian Heritage Month. We look forward to the opening parade on Saturday, complete with a 70-foot dragon as it inches down University Avenue.

Since its inauguration in 1993, Asian Heritage Month has paid tribute to the rich history of Asian Canadians in Ontario and Canada. Asia is a massive and diverse continent. This celebration welcomes people from all areas of Asia, about 30 countries, most, if not all, of which are represented throughout Ontario. Diversity is our great strength in Ontario. Asian Heritage Month is a chance to learn about the history of Asian Canadians and to celebrate their contributions. Asian Heritage Month offers something for everyone, from the third annual education round table at the Asian Institute at the University of Toronto to a Chinese folk art show.

As Senator Vivienne Poy has said, "This month is about the internationalization of knowledge because fostering intercultural understanding in Canada is the first step to creating a truly cosmopolitan Canadian individual who is ready to take on the world."

I want to highlight how valuable the Asian communities are to enriching our social fabric, and particularly so in Willowdale. I urge all of you to join me in participating in these events.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): Today my colleague from Leeds-Grenville filed the following motion in committee:

"Pursuant to sections 16 and 17 of the Auditor General Act, the Auditor General shall conduct a review of the payments made out of the so-called year-end reinvestment fund with a view to explaining how the specific grant decisions were made; to determine whether an undocumented, off-book grant program meets generally accepted accounting and accountability practices in the absence of any formal notice, codified application process, or even a written record of applications; to probe whether or not payments made out of this 'fund' demonstrate a pattern of political favouritism to the partisan associates of the governing party; to determine if the payments made out of this fund contravene the rules prohibiting the use of public funds for political purposes; to make any other determinations or findings the Auditor General feels are appropriate."

This motion was voted down by the Liberals today and, as my colleague just referred, they put forward their

own shameful resolution that is a slap in the face to the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario.

1340

We're going to remind everyone in this province that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals don't have the courage to answer questions and are trying to bury this issue until after the next election.

Liberal David Dingwall summed up the Liberal philosophy best as: They simply feel they are entitled to entitlements, even if it means that the good people of Ontario are picking up the tab for the self-named entitled ones across the way. This is an absolute disgrace to the people of Ontario, and I congratulate my leader, John Tory, and my colleague from Leeds-Grenville for showing the leadership that Ontario needs and not that Dalton McGuinty has.

DESTINY ZAHRA-BOWLES

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): There are only a few people who can honestly say that they have been solely responsible for saving another's life, and to be able to do this at the young age of four is truly amazing.

Her name is Destiny Zahra-Bowles, a resident of my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. One day when she and her mother, Mellisa, were home alone, her mother fainted and crashed head-first into the floor and was left unconscious. Little Destiny Zahra remained calm and went straight to the telephone. She remembered those three magic numbers, 9-1-1. She told the operator what had happened and remained on the line until Brampton firefighters arrived and were able to revive her mom. Mellisa did not want to leave her daughter alone, but Destiny knew her mother needed immediate medical attention, so she reassured her mother that she would be okay.

That's a perfect example of how it's never too late to teach children about emergencies. Destiny might be only four years old, but it was the education she received about the importance of situations like these and how to respond that ultimately saved her mother's life. The simple act of dialing 911 saves lives, no matter what age you are.

I'm honoured to stand here today to recognize Destiny Zahra-Bowles and her mother, Mellisa. They are a symbol of how early education can lead to emergency prevention. I congratulate them on being a great example to the rest of us.

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to recognize Mellisa Zahra and her grandfather. They are here.

VICTIM SERVICES AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I rise today to inform members of this House that this week is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week across Ontario. It's important for us to recognize service providers across

our province who are committed to helping victims on their road to recovery. The thousands of volunteers and professionals who provide support, compassion, advice and information to victims and witnesses of crime in our province give our communities a broader sense of purpose and provide individuals and families with much-needed help during a very traumatic time in their lives.

Today the Attorney General, Michael Bryant, announced the recipients of the inaugural Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction honouring individuals or organizations that are dedicated to the support of victims and provide victim services. These awards also recognize victims—individuals who have courageously forged a better future for themselves, their families and communities.

As well as providing a well-deserved thank-you to outstanding leaders in the victim services community, this award program also encourages the sharing of innovative ideas and best practices among victim services professionals across the province. The Attorney General's awards of distinction support Ontario's reputation as a national leader in providing meaningful assistance to victims when and where it is needed most.

I am pleased to welcome the recipients to the gallery today, if we could recognize them, please. Moonie Ali is from Scarborough. Brian Weller—yes, you may stand—is from Markham. Rick Goodwin is from Ottawa. And two people from my area that I'm very proud of: Jo-Anne Hughes, who works with child witness support, and Lynn Zammit, who works with restorative justice in youth at risk. I'm familiar with their work, and I'm sure all the others are just as wonderful.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise in the Legislature today to talk about the McGuinty government's commitment to fighting global climate change and to continuing to repair the damage the previous government left behind.

While we've been working hard to phase out coal plants in Ontario, the leader of the official opposition remains silent on the issue when discussing his climate change plan. I use "his" in quotations, because there were some very familiar initiatives that were first seen in our platform, such as replacing government vehicles with vehicles that use alternative fuels, introducing energy efficiency into government buildings, and improving building codes to make homes more efficient. So we thank the member opposite for his endorsement of our plan.

We've already reduced our reliance on coal by one third, which is the equivalent of taking two million cars off the road. The previous government increased emissions from coal by 127% and slashed the Ministry of the Environment budget.

The leader of the official opposition wants to wait 13 years before even beginning to reduce greenhouse gases,

and we would then have to wait another 30 years for any other significant change.

We can't afford to wait on the issue of climate change. The McGuinty Liberals have been continuing to push forward with real reforms for Ontarians, and we won't back down, regardless of the opposition.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery Senator William Doyle from Vermont and Assemblyman Robin Schimminger from New York state, representing the Eastern Regional Conference of the Council of State Governments. They are joined by Mr. Alan Sokolow, director, and Mr. Wendell Hannaford, deputy director of the Eastern Regional Conference.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to introduce Mrs. Bernice Hurd and Mrs. Gillian Anderson. Mrs. Hurd is the mother of our Clerk and Gillian is her sister.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SPIRIT OF MANDELA WEEK SEMAINE SPIRIT OF MANDELA

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I rise in the House today to recognize the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board in their celebration of the second annual Spirit of Mandela Week, which is currently taking place from April 23 to 27.

Cette semaine spéciale, qui a été lancée l'année dernière, permet d'inviter les élèves, le personnel, les familles et les membres de la communauté des deux conseils scolaires à se renseigner sur le leader fascinant et sur les défis que les enfants doivent relever en Afrique du Sud.

As part of the weeklong celebration, a Toonie Day is held to raise funds to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and youth in South Africa, in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund (Canada).

In South Africa, more than a million children have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. The funds being raised by the students will help support many child and youth-centred programs and development projects.

I can think of no better way to honour the spirit of a man—one of the most important fighters for democracy, freedom and justice in the 20th century—than by coming together to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and youth.

In 2001, Mr. Mandela came to Toronto to mark the renaming of a school in his honour, Nelson Mandela Park Public School. During that visit, he spoke to the students about the importance of education and stated that their success need not be predicated on race or status.

« Nous savons que vous êtes les leaders de demain—pas seulement à Toronto, pas seulement au Canada, mais dans le monde entier, » a-t-il déclaré.

And I agree. We in the education system in Ontario have a great responsibility to live up to the spirit of Mr. Mandela. We have in our hands the future of not just our city, not just our country, but of this planet, and it is our job to provide the opportunity for our children to embrace their potential, seize opportunities and become citizens of this global village. That is why our government is reforming and rebuilding education in Ontario, so that we can reach every student. They are our future.

1350

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." It is that sentiment that we are celebrating during Spirit of Mandela Week, and we should all keep in mind these powerful and poignant words as we celebrate Education Week next week.

I congratulate the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board, their students, staff, families and community members on starting and supporting this initiative and reminding us of a man whose spirit and determination did not just change a city, not just a nation but the entire world.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of John Tory, leader of the official opposition, and the PC caucus, I rise to speak about Spirit of Mandela Week, the man it honours and the causes it supports.

This week marks the second annual Toronto District School Board Spirit of Mandela Week, during which all TDSB staff, students, families and community members are invited to participate in Toonie Day. Funds raised during this week will be donated to help improve the lives of disadvantaged children and youth in South Africa, in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund. These resources will assist numerous child- and youth-centred programs in South Africa, including those focused on supporting orphans and early childhood development projects.

The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund (Canada) was founded in 1998 and is dedicated to promoting and realizing Nelson Mandela's global vision of social justice for children and youth through providing financial support to assist the children of South Africa. The fund also strives to share with all Canadians the inspirational life story of Nelson Mandela, the history and culture of South Africa, and the challenges faced by the children of South Africa, especially poverty, hunger, homelessness, illiteracy and sickness.

South Africa has the world's highest total number of people living with HIV/AIDS, which causes 40% of all child deaths under the age of five. More than one million children have been orphaned by AIDS in South Africa. More than a million school-age children do not attend school due to malnutrition, distance from schools and lack of resources. The number of children living in institutions or on the streets is also increasing dramatically.

Spirit of Mandela Week takes its inspiration from, and particularly honours, Nelson Mandela, the first President of South Africa to be elected in fully representative democratic elections. As the leader of the African National Congress, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Through his 27 years in prison, much of it spent in a cell on Robben Island, Mandela became the most widely known figure in the struggle against apartheid and an international icon of freedom and equality.

Following his release from prison in 1990, Mandela's policy of reconciliation and negotiation led the transition to South Africa's multiracial democracy. Since the end of apartheid, he has been widely praised, even by white South Africans and former opponents.

In 1993, Nelson Mandela received the Nobel peace prize. The people of South Africa fondly refer to him as Madiba, an honorary title of the elders of Mandela's royal clan, the kings of the Thembu people.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Toronto District School Board for this most excellent initiative that undoubtedly teaches our students the enduring values of volunteerism, community service and self-sacrificing heroism undertaken in a just cause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm very happy to celebrate Spirit of Mandela Week. As the minister said, this special week invites students, staff, families and community members from both boards in Toronto, Catholic and public, to learn more about this inspirational leader and the challenges facing the children of South Africa. I hope it's also a week that invites governments at all levels to reflect about the challenges that children of colour face in Toronto, Ontario and Canada as well.

Yes, we are happy to celebrate and to be part of the celebration of Toonie Day, which is held to raise funds to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and youth in South Africa in partnership with the Nelson Mandela children's fund. We think this is great. God knows so many children in Africa need a lot of economic assistance and social assistance from the rest of the world.

But there's a lot that I think we can and should do in our own borders, in our own local places. I agree with Nelson Mandela when he said that education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world. As I reflect on that, I think about so many of our immigrant kids who come from so many parts of the world and who don't have ESL teachers. I think about special education and how so many of our kids—yes, many who come from people of colour—don't have the special education services they need for them to have the opportunity to be able to change the world. I think of the thousands of students who have been suspended across Ontario, and particularly in Toronto, who are suffering the problem of discrimination, as the Human Rights Commissioner indicated years ago when he said that thousands and thousands of our kids are being suspended and expelled, and many of them come from people of colour, students of colour. Something is wrong with that.

Something is wrong when working people of colour are sometimes first to be fired and last to be hired. Something is wrong when people of colour generally earn less than the rest of us; something is wrong with that.

So as we twin to talk about what we can do to help kids in South Africa and other parts of the world, what is it that we can do as governments here to help children of colour, to help parents of colour, to help working women of colour? What could we do to help our aboriginal communities, First Nations kids who have tremendous problems in our system?

Let's commit ourselves to that as governments. Let's commit ourselves, as political parties, to do that and to deal with that. Once we do that, then all these other initiatives make sense. They do make sense. For us to focus our energies on what we can do to send a toonie to South Africa, in my view, is good, but we can do more as political parties, and we should do more. This is an urgent call to every political party, every politician at all levels—municipal, provincial and federal—to do more, because racism does exist, even though many would like to hide the fact that it exists. We have it. It is around us, and it's good to acknowledge that it exists. Once you acknowledge that it exists, then you can do something about it. So let's deal with that problem here in our own borders in the spirit of Nelson Mandela Week and deal with inequities and deal with injustices and deal with discrimination and deal with racism. When we do that, we can feel better with ourselves as people, as individuals, and as politicians. That's what I urge of us all in this chamber.

DAY OF MOURNING

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the day of mourning for fallen workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, Saturday marks the 23rd day of mourning, a day when we remember and honour those who have died, been injured or become ill as a result of their job. The Canadian Labour Congress declared April 28 the Day of Mourning in 1984 as a day to remember our fallen, injured and ill workers. Most importantly, it is a day to look to the future and for each and every one of us in this House to reaffirm our commitment to safe and healthy workplaces.

Thanks to the commitment and dedication of those who fight for workplace health and safety, injury rates continue to decline. From businesses to our communities, in hospitals, in schools and in the government, health and safety advocates work hard every day to ensure the health and safety of workplaces here in the province of Ontario.

1400

Despite these efforts, though, too many men, women and, most unfortunately, young workers continue to lose

their lives or suffer injuries or illnesses on the job. In 2006 alone, here in Ontario there were 101 work-related fatalities and a recorded 83,179 workplace injuries and illnesses that resulted in lost time at work.

Behind these numbers, we need to remember that these are real people and real lives that have been forever changed. These tragedies are alarming and unacceptable. That's why our government is committed to do more—to continue to raise the bar for workplace health and safety.

We must work together to prevent these needless deaths, injuries and illnesses. We have the knowledge and resources to prevent them, and we must make sure that every workplace has access to the information and tools they need to improve workplace health and safety. We must hold those in positions of responsibility to account, and that includes every one of us assembled here in this Legislature.

Today we remember those who have been touched by tragedy. We will honour their memory if we take action to ensure that no further tragedies happen tomorrow.

One of the things that has struck me as the Minister of Labour for this province is that every couple of days my BlackBerry goes off with a message from my ministry informing me that somebody in the province has been killed on the job. Think about it: That man or woman or young individual left home in the morning, said goodbye to their family, and everybody assumed they would be coming home. They're not coming home. They're never coming home. That table is going to have one seat that will never be filled. That happens far too often, and we need to think of that.

So it's important that all of us rededicate ourselves to prevention. Let us take action today so that tomorrow we do not have to remember what we could have done. As elected representatives, we have a duty and a responsibility to lead by example and make safety a priority every day in our lives.

I hope the honourable members will mark the day of mourning at memorial events in their own communities on Friday or Saturday this week.

Very shortly we will observe a moment of silence to remember those who have died, been injured or become ill as a result of their jobs. I ask each of us to think about what we can do to prevent future deaths, injuries, and illness in the workplace.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today I join my colleagues on all sides of the House to speak on behalf of our leader, John Tory, and our caucus as we commemorate the International Day of Mourning for Workers, which, as the minister has said, will be remembered. Services will take place throughout our province on Friday and Saturday of this week, and many of us will be participating.

It is on this day of mourning and today that we remember the many workers in this province who have suffered injury, illness or death while in the workplace. Again, these are individuals who left their homes and went to work and never did anticipate that that would be the outcome.

Today is the day when we are also reminded of the terrible human, social and economic toll that workplace illnesses, accidents and fatalities can take. Today is an opportunity for us to join with workers, with employers, and with all others to express our sincere condolences to the families and the friends of those who have been killed or injured in the workplace.

I also believe that this is a very important day for us in this House. It is a day for us as legislators to affirm together—all parties—our shared commitment to the prevention of illness, injury and zero tolerance for fatalities. We all share a common responsibility to move forward, to do what we can collectively and personally to prevent illness, death and injury.

I know from personal experience, having worked with my colleagues on all sides of the House, that all three parties have in the past, and will in the future, commit to do what they can to make safety a priority and improve health and safety in the workplace.

As a former Minister of Labour, I have experienced, as the minister today expressed, the sadness and the sorrow that the news of each workplace death brings, and you know the impact it's going to have on family and friends.

In fact, one of the very first situations I encountered, which has made an indelible impression on my strong commitment to health and safety, was a visit that I received from Paul Kells and his family shortly after they lost their 19-year-old son, Sean. He had been killed in a workplace accident just a few days into the job. In speaking to Paul, he had a desire to do something about the tragedy that had come to him and to his family, and he set up a foundation. Today, we have the Safe Communities Foundation that was set up by Paul Kells. He eventually moved from his volunteer work and from his business career, in 2002, to devote his full-time energy to his dream for a widespread health and safety culture shift, not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but throughout the world. He was inspired to share his vision to do what he could to eliminate the pain, the suffering and the cost of needless, preventable injury.

I've also met with another champion for health and safety, Rob Ellis, who lost his son and is devoting himself to ensuring that no other young person loses their life.

I've met with many unions and certainly many labour councils, and I've met with employers. They all share that commitment to do what they can to make their workplaces safe.

However, despite the work of many, many dedicated people, whether it's unions, employers, labour councils or individuals, each year there are those who become injured, who suffer illness, and who die. In fact, on April 23, there was an accident in the subway. I think we all know that one man was killed—a loving father, a husband, a son—and there were two others injured. We need to make sure, in remembrance of these individuals, to continue to develop the programs, to provide training that will prevent death, illness and injury.

At this time, I particularly want to encourage us to do what we can for our young people. Many of them are going to be going into the workplace for the first time. It's important for them to know that they have the right to say no, that they're not going to do unsafe work. It's important that our children know they have rights. We don't want to put anybody in a position that could cost them their life.

So on this day in this House, I would encourage each one of us to renew our personal commitment. There truly is a lot we can do in order to ensure that we support the efforts of all of those who are devoted to the task of eliminating illness, injury and death in our workplace.

1410

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): People don't go to work imagining that that day is going to be their last. Tragically, our health and safety laws and employer practices fail to protect every worker from fatalities and debilitating injuries.

As we mark the April 28 day of mourning, Howard Hampton and Ontario's New Democrats convey heartfelt condolences in memory of the Ontario workers who lost their lives on the job in the past year.

I'm thinking of the hundreds of workers who still should be alive today, people like Antonio Almeida, 38, a dedicated husband and father of two young children, a model Toronto Transit Commission employee who perished just this week, early on Monday morning, in a subway tunnel tragedy; and Mike Damiano, who lived with his wife and 11-year-old son in St. Catharines until the 44-metre crane he was operating fell over and crushed him at Port Weller Dry Docks on March 13.

Regrettably, there are hundreds more Antonios and Mikes who won't be seeing any tomorrows. We express sympathy to the families for their loss, to friends, co-workers and communities who were forced to say early goodbyes to those whose lives were taken by the dangerous work they do. We mourn their lost dreams.

Eighty-three years after Ontario passed the first Workers' Compensation Act in 1914 and 65 years after that the Occupational Health and Safety Act in 1979, our province continues to be marred by workplace deaths and injuries. According to the WSIB and Ministry of Labour statistics, as the minister has already noted, there were 101 work-related deaths in 2006 and 83,129 work-related injuries or illnesses. This is unacceptable and I think everyone in this House would agree. Ontario ranks fifth highest in Canada for lives lost on the job. According to the Centre for the Study of Living Standards, in Ontario there are 6.5 deaths per 100,000 workers.

New Democrats believe that Ontario can do better. New Democrats stand in solidarity with injured workers and labour organizations who work tirelessly to "fight for the living." We recognize, applaud and support the dogged efforts and hard work of injured workers' groups in communities across our province. The Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups and the Industrial Accident Victims' Group of Ontario are some of the partners that are fighting this fight on a daily basis. Their voices

and ours collectively will spur the kind of change Ontarians want and need to see.

As a commemoration day, April 28 is more than a symbolic day to remember the victims of the past. By highlighting Ontario's workers who continue to be exposed to risk of injury or death, the day also serves to symbolically transform sentiments of mourning, loss and suffering into positive action for dialogue and change. For this reason, April 28 is forward-looking, a day for action as well as a day for mourning.

On the action side of the equation there is much we can do at little or no cost to government. For example, all workers should be covered under the WSIB. Currently, 1.3 million Ontario workers are excluded from that coverage. After comprehensive consultation and hearings, a government report recommended universal coverage for Ontario workers back in 2003. Let's get on with that change. Workers who fall seriously ill with cancers and heart disease from their exposure to toxic chemicals should be receiving automatic compensation and not left with the insult of being tossed on to the WSIB scrap heap. We need presumptive legislation in Ontario.

Investigations and enforcement must be effective and penalties severe where employers have failed to protect their workers from harm. All workplaces need joint health and safety committees with certified worker reps on them making sure that the work is safe and that workplaces are not going to cause injury or death to their co-workers. We must ensure the dignity of injured workers today, with a system that is sensitive to their suffering and responsive to their needs. Why can't their compensation payments be directly deposited into their bank accounts, for example? Instead, they have to worry that the cheque is going to come in the mail. All of our other systems are direct deposit, but injured workers are just never sure if that cheque is going to show up. This is a technology change that can easily be implemented and needs to happen.

Why has the promise not been kept to provide retroactive cost-of-living increases and annual indexing for injured workers to stop the financial slide injured workers find themselves on through no fault of their own? Why is there not an express law to control workplace harassment, a problem that has resulted in employee injuries and deaths even to this day? There are many, many other issues that we speak about regularly in this House, whether it's through private members' bills or other initiatives. Or whether it's on days like today, when we're talking about our annual day of mourning for injured workers.

The time is now. There are many changes that need to be made and we need to recommit ourselves, as others have said, to make sure that those changes are made in Ontario for the injured workers of today and to make sure that we don't have further injured workers in the future.

The Speaker: I'd ask members and our guests if we could rise for a time of silence to remember fallen workers.

The House observed a moment's silence.

VISITORS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd ask all members of the Legislature to welcome some guests who are watching the proceedings today: Mr. Gerry Donnelly, from the Alberta Building Trades Council; Mr. Wayne Peppard from the British Columbia and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council; Alex Lolua, from the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario; and Mr. Patrick Dillon, from the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Would you please, on behalf of this chamber, determine if the latest McGuinty exercise in communication has been submitted to the Auditor General for his approval? I'm providing you with a copy of it now. Having it delivered—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Props are not in order.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce some guests from the riding of Peterborough. Loyola and Lorraine Moloney, and their son Dennis Moloney, who's a high school teacher at Adam Scott. Two years ago, Dennis received a commendation from the then Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy. Dennis's quick action saved a student's life at Adam Scott, a student who had experienced a potentially fatal accident. I welcome them today here from Peterborough.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth—Middlesex): I'd like all members to welcome His Worship Mayor Dan Mathieson, the mayor of the city of Stratford and Pat Shantz from the city.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Niagara Centre will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Minister of Northern Development will come to order.

It's now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ATTENDANCE OF MINISTERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds—Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As you know, questions surrounding a political slush fund for friends of the Liberal Party has been a significant issue in this place over the course of the past few days. We've been advised by the government House leader that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration will not be here until at least 3 p.m. today. All of our questions are devoted to this and I ask for unanimous consent to suspend the business of the House until the minister arrives.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Runciman asked for unanimous consent to suspend—I heard a no.

1420

Interjections.

The Speaker: It's now time for oral questions.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Order. You're wasting time.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka will come to order.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Standing order number 1 indicates that, "The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that," amongst other things, "respects the rights of members ... to hold the government accountable for its policies."

When the government refuses to have its Premier here, when the government refuses to have a minister here who is at the eye of the storm in terms of one of the most notorious scandals to hit this government or to be witnessed by a Parliament, Mr. Speaker, I say to you, with respect, that you are charged with the responsibility to ensure that the opposition is able to hold this government accountable, and I call upon you to recess this Parliament until such time this afternoon as the Premier and/or the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration appears. What are they afraid of?

The Speaker: I've heard your point of order—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: Mr. Kormos has referred to item 1 in the standing orders with respect to the ability of the opposition to hold government members and cabinet ministers accountable. Premier McGuinty is not here. There has been one, single minister who has been the focus of questions for several consecutive days because of the Liberal slush fund.

This minister would know full well, Mr. Speaker, that the questions would be directed to him in the Legislature today. There are ongoing questions about the political nature of the grants doled out as part of the slush fund by that minister. Certainly at the federal level, with the cousins of this Liberal Party, we saw the likes of Guité, Galliano, among others—

The Speaker: We're starting to debate. I'm prepared to rule on the point of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm prepared to rule on the point of order. The members are right. The opposition does have the need to be able to hold the government accountable. But I look over at the government, and the government benches have a number of ministers who could answer questions.

Mr. Hudak: Where's the coward minister?

The Speaker: I ask the member for Erie—Lincoln to withdraw that remark.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Erie—Lincoln, will you withdraw that comment?

Mr. Hudak: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you.

It's now time for oral questions.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In looking at—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Tory: I was just looking for the section here and I actually found it while we had the short break there.

I wanted to refer you to section 1(c) of the standing orders, which provides that "in all contingencies not provided for ... the question shall be decided by the Speaker or Chair," and that you should base your decisions "on the democratic rights of members referred to in clause (b)." That, of course, is a reference to rule 1(b).

In this instance, you just made mention a moment ago, sir, of the fact that the government benches have people there who are prepared to answer questions. But the fact is, we want to put a question on behalf of the people to the responsible minister, and the responsible minister is not here. The only other provision that exists here is what it says in section 36(e): "A minister to whom an oral question is directed may refer the question to another minister who is responsible for the subject matter to which the question relates."

Well, there is no other minister. That is the point we're trying to make, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter that we want to pursue on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario. We are trying to assert the democratic rights of this place. You render meaningless the role of the opposition if the minister can stay away from this House, if there is no other minister we can ask the question of and no one they can refer it to.

We're asking to you rule on behalf of the people that we have the opportunity to have this House stand adjourned for a period of now only half an hour. We were originally told this minister would be here at 2:45. Now we're told it's 3 o'clock. In a few minutes it'll be 3:15. They are deliberately avoiding presenting this minister to be held accountable, and I would ask you to rule, pursuant to standing order 1(c), that this House should stand adjourned for at least 30 minutes from now, if not for 45 minutes.

1430

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: In my capacity as Deputy Premier I'm very prepared to assist honourable members in answering their questions, and remind members of this House that Minister Colle has a 94% attendance record at question period.

The Speaker: Members would know that the Speaker has no ability to compel the attendance of any minister or any member. The Deputy Premier is here.

Mr. Tory: Speaker, on a point of order: I did not ask that you compel the attendance of any minister. We

merely ask that the House be adjourned for a period of time so the minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Oral questions.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): [*Inaudible*] a woman in the Chair.

Mr. Tory: Someone, anyway; somebody in the Chair.

My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it concerns the political slush fund.

I just want to state our extreme dissatisfaction at the fact that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration—the Deputy Premier points out with such enthusiasm that he has a 94% attendance record. Isn't it just interesting that he chooses today to be away? Isn't it just interesting that this great attendance record is such a coincidence?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The standing orders make it out of order for an honourable member to draw attention to the absence of another member.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the remark made to the member opposite.

Mr. Tory: All right. So we'll ask the Deputy Premier—

The Speaker: I ask you to withdraw the last remark you made.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I ask the Leader of the Opposition if he will withdraw the remark about the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Tory: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: We have today, on the slush-fund scandal, the government having refused a reasonable request from the opposition to delay the proceedings of the House for 45 minutes so that we could ask the responsible minister, and that follows this morning, at the standing committee on public accounts, the McGuinty Liberal government using its majority to shut down and close the door on any investigation of this matter by the auditor.

My question—and if I have to ask it to the Deputy Premier, I will—is: Do you know if the minister let it be known to the Premier's office that he wanted to have the Auditor General come in and clear his name and clear the air on this matter and that in fact it was the Premier's office that ordered this matter shut down at the standing committee on public accounts?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: In his question, the honourable member suggested that the Auditor General doesn't have the potential to do such an investigation, but his own letter dated recently to the honourable member

says differently, from the Auditor General to the Leader of the Opposition. "Also, since April 1, 2005, as a result of the Audit Statute Law Amendment Act that amended the Audit Act ... my office has the authority to audit how grant recipients ... have used grants they have received. The amendments expanded my authority under section 12.2."

So it has been made very clear by the Auditor General himself in a letter to the honourable member that he has the potential to do those things.

On the matter that is at hand, my colleague the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration made statements in the Legislature on Monday that indicated of course that while we recognize that this is an area long since underfunded, there are ways to improve the process as we go forward. We're dedicated to those, and we're open to all ideas that people might have about the focus of such reforms.

Mr. Tory: That answer had only a passing acquaintance with the facts, because the facts are that the auditor went on to say in the letter—if you want to read the whole thing into the record—that in the event we wanted any kind of expeditious review of this, it could happen in two circumstances: (1) if the minister himself asked for it—and we've repeatedly asked the minister if he will do this, and he hasn't as yet—and (2) if the standing committee on public accounts asked for it. There's a third option, which is if the entire assembly asks for it. Of course, we know there's no point in asking the entire assembly because the McGuinty Liberal government will use its majority to slam the door shut on anybody taking a look at this.

Let me just quote what Murray Campbell wrote in this morning's *Globe and Mail*: "If the Premier blocks an opposition request being made formally this morning to have the Auditor General investigate, it will not look good."

I certainly agree, and I think most people out there, most taxpayers agree with Mr. Campbell, because now it looks even worse; that what's happening is, we're trying to shift the onus to the groups themselves. Will you agree to get the auditor in? You could stand up and do it, if you want, as a minister. Why don't you stand up, then, as Deputy Premier and ask the auditor—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I've had the privilege of being a member in this place since 1999, and I've had the opportunity to witness the operation of the Auditor General in the time since then. He's an independent officer. As his letter goes on at greater length than even those sections that I quoted, he has the authority to make determination about how the resources of his office are used, and he said clearly that he has the chance to orient himself towards this file if that is his choosing. That's an important point.

But also, as I've said, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has indicated, of course, that there are ways this process can be approved and that we've taken note of those. But what I find intriguing about the honourable

member is that he has a disdain for this particular form of contribution to community groups in our province with a determined need that's very obvious to everyone and where there's agreement around it. Why is it that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm having much difficulty hearing the minister complete his response. I need to be able to hear it. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: So I pose a question to the honourable member: Why was it that, in the course of private conversation over the course of the last few weeks, you've lobbied me to actively engage in finding one-time money for an organization in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Tory: I'm happy to answer that question, but I don't answer questions here. I'll answer questions out there.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Now I need to be able to hear the question. We all know how this place works.

The member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough must withdraw.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Withdrawn.

Mr. Tory: Maybe I will answer and say, first of all, that the minister should go out and wash his hands after that. Secondly, I'll be happy—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Halton will come to order. Order. I will be warning members once, and then I will be naming them.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Consider yourself warned.

Mr. Tory: I'll be happy to explain to the media outside exactly the circumstances in which that discussion took place, Mr. Speaker, but the minister should be ashamed of himself.

The motion passed by the Liberals at the public accounts committee to ram that through and shut down any attempt by the auditor to look at this on an expeditious basis reminds of the words of Judge Gomery, who said, "Good intentions are not an excuse for maladministration of this magnitude." Two days ago at the standing committee on estimates, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health said, "We believe ... the Auditor General should have more range to do the work to give Ontarians the information they need, and to give legislators and those in government the opportunity to do an even more effective job at all times with the investment of resources." Obviously the Liberal members who sit all around you didn't get the message.

All we asked today was for either the assembly or the standing committee on public accounts, which the McGuinty Liberals control, or the minister to get the auditor in to look at this now. You only have a passing acquaintance with the facts when you suggest that it wouldn't speed this up by getting the minister to agree to do it now. Why won't you agree to have the auditor come now, which he said would if asked by the committee on

public accounts or the assembly or the minister? Why won't you do it? What are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: My acquaintance with the facts on the issue of Mr. Tory's—I'm sorry, the Leader of the Opposition's—very direct lobbying of me for the delivery of resources to albeit a very good organization in my own riding is directly in contradiction to all the words the honourable member has offered about the sheer necessity of supporting community-based organizations in the province of Ontario.

I ask the honourable member, why is it possible, in quiet conversation, for you to have one standard about one-time grants? Why is it okay for you to lobby me about a one-time grant and then bring to the floor of this Legislature nothing but disdain for the similar practice?

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Leeds–Grenville has been warned. The member for Simcoe–Grey has been warned.

Interjection: [Inaudible] time for the Minister of Health to do his sleaze act.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I name the member for Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Runciman was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it concerns the slush fund—

Ms. DiNovo: We need a woman Speaker.

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. DiNovo: We need a woman Speaker.

The Speaker: Order. I will not warn the member for Parkdale–High Park again.

Mr. Tory: Here's a quote from the Toronto Star editorial today, entitled "Let the Auditor Probe Provincial Grants." It says, "Currently, it is almost impossible to find out from Queen's Park what the money was spent on, how the organizations were selected, who chose them, and what steps were taken to ensure the money was spent properly. This ad hoc distribution of tax dollars is inexcusable."

I point out to you, who should go out and wash your hands, quite frankly, that the discussion I had with you concerned submissions that are already made in writing, which is more than was the case of any of these grants we're talking about here. For you to misrepresent those discussions in that way is inexcusable.

Today, your party covered up—covered up and voted down and used your majority to vote down today in the standing committee on public accounts—an attempt to do exactly what the Toronto Star said needed to be done, which is to clear the air, to look at what was done here where there were no applications, no paper, no nothing—just handed out money to your friends, people associated with the Liberal Party in some cases; others of them,

you've stained their reputation by having them become associated with this when they do good work. Will you ask the auditor to come in and investigate this now—

The Speaker: The question has been asked, but before you answer, I've expressed my concern on a number of occasions with the language that's being used in here. It needs to be—and we all recognize this—at a level of civility and in the tradition of this place. So I would ask members on all sides to remember where we are and why we're here and respect both the institution and the people who have sent us here to do their work.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: In that spirit, I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for all of the advice that he's offering with respect to hygiene in the province of Ontario. This is indeed an issue that's been well associated with the necessity of clamping down on the spread of infectious disease, so I want to thank him very much.

I want to refer to the letter from the —

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): It's all very funny, eh, George? It's very funny.

The Speaker: I will not warn the member for Erie—Lincoln again.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: You're making all the jokes for everybody right now.

Just to have a chance—

Mr. Hudak: You still think it's funny.

The Speaker: I will name the member for Erie—Lincoln, Mr. Hudak. You've been warned.

Mr. Hudak was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I know that the honourable member, the Leader of the Opposition, has now offered a standard, which is that it's very, very okay to be lobbying vigorously on behalf of big cultural organizations, but when it comes down to the Korean Canadian Women's Association and the need for some modest resource to renovate their facilities to be able to provide services, the honourable member finds great distinction around that. I want to—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need to remind members that I need to be able to hear, as all members need to be able to hear, the response of the minister.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I had completed that answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tory: This minister obviously has no standards whatsoever in terms of any kind of—it's just an absolute disgrace.

The Toronto Star editorial today goes on to say, "McGuinty should turn the books over to the province's Auditor General for a thorough examination. As disturbing questions about this program continue to percolate, it is time to shine a bright light on how Queen's Park doled out this money." All we're asking about all this—and you have to respond with all of your low-brow, low-down, disgusting kind of tactics. All we're asking is, rather than have the minister stay away from the House, rather than you get up and use your low-down tactics, why don't you just get up and say, if there's nothing to

hide here in terms of these grants that were made without application, without interviews, without a process, without an audit of any kind after the fact—why don't you just get up; what are you hiding?—and say you will agree right now to have the auditor examine these things, as the Star said, as the Globe said, as the people are saying? Why don't you have enough guts to get up and do that?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The minister in question has a very good record of attendance. He's been here all week, he will be here later, and he's been available to the media. I think to hear all of this manufactured hysteria on the part of a partial absence from one question period is interesting.

1450

The honourable member questions my standards, but he hasn't answered to his double standard—the double standard which says it's okay for him to lobby for resources to be provided to an organization without an application process, but quite altogether inappropriate that a community-based organization like the Flemingdon food bank might receive a very modest amount of resource in order to support the program that they run, which is so essential to communities.

We acknowledge, as the minister did on Monday, that we have to do a better job with respect to this process, and that action is being undertaken. But we believe fundamentally that it's necessary that our government and the province of Ontario build on these kinds of initiatives to better support people in local communities. Why is it okay for the honourable Leader of the Opposition to lobby for—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tory: There's never been a question raised by anybody in this House—in the NDP, in the PC Party or anywhere else—about grants to organizations that help newcomers in terms of the work they do. What we've been asking questions about over and over again is the process pursuant to which that money is allocated.

In the event I had suggested to you that there should be a grant issued to any cultural organization without an application form, without an interview, without anybody looking at it, and that it be done in a way that you have a quick check to make sure in some cases that it's done, because the campaign chair of the Liberal Party or websites registered to the ownership of the Liberal Party or donors to the Liberal Party might be the ones that get picked out of all the groups that could get picked—if I'd ever made any suggestion like that to you, I would get up and apologize for that, because you know what? That is conduct disrespectful of the taxpayers, it's disrespectful of the taxpayers' money, and it is absolutely an abdication of responsibility that you have to safeguard that money. You should be agreeing right now to let the auditor come in and look at this and clear the air and show some respect for the taxpayers, even if you don't want to respect this place. That's what you should do.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Perhaps it's because the honourable member didn't have the forbearance to write

a personal note of apology to those individuals that he smeared earlier in the week through his mistaken research that he can now pretend in this Legislature that he hasn't been out there bemoaning the support that is on offer to these community-based organizations. What other conclusion can be drawn from the work that he has done through the course of this week and before to make it seem as if it isn't important to be able to support the work of the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples?

We acknowledge the necessity of supporting community-based organizations. Our minister, himself of immigrant stock, has learned about the necessity to support people in immigration settlement. We acknowledge fully, as we did on Monday, that there are efforts that must be undertaken to enhance the quality of the processes. Those are under way. We look forward to being a government that finds even greater capacity to support the people who have come to our country from other places and who need a little bit of assistance at the community level.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm seeking unanimous consent, based on the advice that the Minister of Citizenship will be here at 3, to hold down the lead questions, please.

The Speaker: You're asking to stand down both lead questions?

Mr. Kormos: I'm seeking unanimous consent, based on the advice that the Minister of Citizenship—

The Speaker: [*Inaudible*] can actually stand them down.

New question? I think the new question would be back over here with the opposition.

Interjection.

The Speaker: You stood down your lead question, so the rotation now goes to the official opposition.

Member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I would ask, since the Minister of Citizenship is on his way and will be here, I guess, in three minutes now, to stand down my question to the minister—and ask for unanimous consent.

The Speaker: I would just inform the member that you would need to ask for unanimous consent for a question to be stood down.

Mrs. Witmer: I would ask for unanimous consent, since it appears that in about two or three minutes the minister will be here, and I would like to ask my question to him. So I will ask for unanimous consent to stand down my question until such time as the honourable member does arrive in this chamber.

The Speaker: Mrs. Witmer has asked for unanimous consent to stand down her question. Agreed? I heard a no.

New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I'm going to ask my question to the Deputy Premier because maybe he can answer this. Nobody else has been able to answer anything.

Yesterday I asked the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration whether he was aware that an organization that

you and your party have flowed funds to is officially registered on the Internet as the Mississauga West provincial liberal riding association. He seemed to be completely nonplussed, unaware, unknowledgeable; hadn't a clue.

I'm sending you across—the page has just given it to you—a copy of the association's return to the chief electoral officer. I wonder if you could note the name of the chief financial officer and explain to this House exactly who that person is.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I believe the question that was raised yesterday had to do with the fact that on a voluntary basis a member who is now a member of the Legislature, who was in the business of computer technology, was involved in helping to register a domain name. Domain names last for five years. To the very best of my knowledge, associated with that domain name, the name of the honourable member for Mississauga West came up—further evidence of his commitment to community-based organizations. I believe that as the organization five years hence re-registers its domain name, it will be updated with the appropriate current officers. That's the information, to the very best of my knowledge.

Mr. Prue: It's just like yesterday: They're afraid to read out the information because they know how bad it is. Let me help you, Minister. The name on the association return list is one Jennifer Berney, who is a staffer and a staff officer at Liberal Party headquarters in Ontario. That is the person who files the return. The Mississauga West Liberal association has been run by the central party of the Ontario Liberals for over a year. Meanwhile, they're also the registered domain holder, by virtue of the law, for the community organizations receiving grants from your government. You should have known, your minister should have known, your Premier should have known, because this is centrally registered right out of your party headquarters. What is going on here?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: What's going here is a whole lot of manufacturing. A whole lot of manufacturing is going on. The—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I cannot hear the minister.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The riding association of Mississauga West was, for a point in time—and I don't have all of the information before me—in trusteeship, which means that the central party plays a more active role in helping to make sure that all the filings and stuff are provided appropriately.

The honourable member for Mississauga West, in 2002, when he was involved in private enterprise, was involved in helping to register the domain name for an organization. Five years subsequently, that domain name is ready for renewal and is appropriately registered to the organization that holds it. This is obviously a carry-over

which relates to work that the honourable member was involved in.

Furthermore, after these matters were raised yesterday, the member has been in touch with the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, advised him of the activities they've been involved in. A written judgment should be forthcoming. But a verbal assurance was offered that there was nothing untoward in the involvement of the honourable member except goodwill towards community-based organizations well before the honourable member was elected.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Labour. As you know, this Saturday, April 28, individuals across Ontario and across this country, in fact around the world, will come together to remember those who have died or have been injured or have become ill at work. April 28 is now internationally recognized as the day to mourn victims of workplace accidents and illness and is marked in approximately 80 countries on the plane. It is also a day when we renew our commitment to improving workplace safety and health, and all of us in this House would agree that one occupational accident, illness or death is one too many.

The suffering experienced by an injured worker is a shared suffering, a suffering that includes the family, friends, colleagues and entire communities. It's not just physical or mental, but it's also emotional and has to do with self-esteem and self-worth. Governments are responsible for helping to reduce that suffering, and I would like to ask the Minister of Labour to explain for us what it is that his government has been doing to help in that regard.

1500

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): As we heard earlier, April 28 is a very important day. It is a day for each of us to remember those who have been killed, injured or have suffered from workplace illness. We all collectively need to work towards that goal to reduce and one day eliminate workplace incidents.

I can say with pride that our efforts have helped to reduce those numbers, but we do have more work to do. We recognized, as a government, that we had to make investments in health and safety. We had to make investments in occupational health and safety officers. That's why we've moved forward with the hiring of 200 additional health and safety inspectors.

When we took office, Ontario unfortunately had the lowest ratio of health and safety inspectors in Canada. We moved forward with an ambitious plan, and that is to build a culture of prevention in this province and save lives. In order for us to achieve that goal, we needed to strengthen enforcement. Since we've begun, we've seen 30,000 fewer lost-time injuries—over 15,600 fewer in the last year alone. We're well on track to reaching our goal of 20% fewer lost-time injuries by 2008.

Ms. Mossop: Thank you for sharing some of those statistics with us. We've discussed this issue a number of times in the House and I've said it before: I've worked very closely with the injured workers in my riding and throughout Ontario to help bring about some changes—long overdue changes—and I have been gratified to work with a team and a minister that has moved strongly in that direction.

One of the areas that has been moved in is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, which our government recently proposed through our budget. I would like him to reiterate those changes, because they marked a very important first step. They were structural changes that removed a lot of barriers and set in motion the ability for our injured workers to move forward in a way that they have not been able to in a very long time.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I thank the member from Stoney Creek for her advocacy on behalf of injured workers not only in the province of Ontario, but more specifically in the Hamilton area. I'm proud that her advocacy work, through her private member's efforts—we were able to see her private member's bill incorporated into our work to assist injured workers.

We recognize that it was very important to enhance benefits for more than 155,000 injured workers and to provide those injured workers with their first real increase in over 12 years. Our proposal for three 2.5% increases over the next 18 months will more than double the increase that injured workers have seen over the last 12 years. Further, we're going to be providing flexibility to allow the government to provide fair increases without the necessity of making legislative changes.

We're investing in the Office of the Worker Adviser; we're changing the definition of deeming; changes to lock-in; lump sum payment; changes to the board size. We're listening to what the injured workers are saying and we're going to work with injured workers in this province.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I understand he is here now. It does regard the Liberal Party slush fund. I want to go back and ask this minister a question that my colleague the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke asked yesterday and the day before.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Perhaps the member for Kitchener–Waterloo would like to begin again.

Mrs. Witmer: My question regards the Liberal Party slush fund. I want to go back to a question that my colleague the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke asked you yesterday and the day before and that you have refused to answer. You are quoted in the Toronto Star on April 20 as saying that this money "has to go through

[the] other ministers”—the Minister of Finance, who is the Liberal Party campaign chair, and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—“and ultimately, I guess, by cabinet.” Now, these are your words; they’re not my words. Will you, Minister, please tell us what direction you received from the Liberal Party campaign chair as to who was to receive this money?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the member for her question. I’ve answered the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that I have been advocating on behalf of newcomers, I have been advocating on behalf of unemployed foreign-trained doctors and engineers that that government ignored, and I have been advocating on their behalf to all the ministers on this side, to all of the members, because they’ve said that for too many years nobody did anything for them.

Mrs. Witmer: The minister insults this House. During the term from 1995 to 2003, under the leadership of our government, we increased the number of foreign-trained professionals, doctors, by 130%. We have all worked on behalf of newcomers, and you insult us all.

The minister said this: You had to go through the Liberal Party campaign chair before it was approved. We just want to know, Minister—it’s very simple—how did it work, especially when it appears that one of the people connected to one of the groups had made donations to the Vaughan–King–Aurora riding association? We just want you to clear it up. Did the Minister of Finance tell you where the money should go?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Mr. Speaker, you know, it’s astonishing that that member stands up and talks about their party’s sad-sack record on helping newcomers, especially the foreign-trained. We never, ever heard them talk about helping newcomers. All we heard from them was a complete silence when it came to newcomers—zero. We on this side, Minister of Health, are now investing \$53 million in an international medical graduate program. We now have over 210 places in our IMG program. We now have a new law, Bill 124, which means that for the first time there will be fairness in Ontario.

I’ll compare our record on helping integration of foreign-trained professionals and helping newcomers get jobs with their record any day.

Mrs. Witmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would suggest that the minister apologize. Yesterday and the day before—

The Speaker: That’s not a point of order.

New question. Just so we can be helpful, this is your lead question. Leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. Minister, today Dalton McGuinty denied working families across Ontario accountability and transparency in their government when government backbenchers voted against the Auditor General conducting an immediate investigation into the McGuinty government’s year-end slush fund. This is an insult to all those community organizations and cultural organizations that didn’t have a chance to apply

because they didn’t know about the fund. It is also an abdication of the government’s responsibility to ensure that money is spent properly.

My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government so afraid of the Auditor General making public a report on your slush fund before the next election?

1510

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is the same leader of the third party who called organizations we invested in, like the Afghan women’s association, which received some support, or AWIC, the Bloor Information and Life Skills Centre, the United Jewish Appeal, SISO in Hamilton, fly-by-night organizations.

We on this side are very proud of the fact that we’ve had a strong partnership with all of these organizations, large and small, that have helped newcomers, that have enhanced citizen participation. Those organizations have been working with no help for the last 20 years. We are now helping them, along with federal money that is coming for the first time. They are more than worthwhile organizations.

Mr. Hampton: Well, Minister, I think it’s the McGuinty government that is insulting those hard-working organizations, because many of those hard-working organizations were never told that you were giving away some \$20 million. They were never given an opportunity to apply. That’s the problem here, and that was the issue before the public accounts committee. The public accounts committee wanted to bring the Auditor General in to look at this year-end slush fund, and Liberal backbenchers—every one of them—voted against it.

My question again is this: Why is the McGuinty government so afraid of the Auditor General conducting an investigation of your ministry’s slush fund and making public a report before the next election? What does the McGuinty government have to hide from the Auditor General of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member opposite knows full well that it was this government that expanded the powers of the provincial Auditor General. He knows full well that that office can look at any ministry any time it wants. And he knows full well—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I’m having difficulty hearing the minister.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: He knows full well that the investments made this year—the names of the organizations, the amounts—are posted on our website, such outstanding organizations as the United Jewish Appeal, which he calls fly-by-night, organizations like SISO, which he calls fly-by-night, Frontier College, which offers help—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I will not warn the member for Hamilton East again.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Such organizations as the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre he calls fly-by-night. Quinte United Immigrant Services he calls fly-by-night.

The Sudbury Multicultural/Folk Arts Association, the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association, COSTI—all these organization he claims are not accountable. We've had incredible experience working with them and partnering with them.

Mr. Hampton: The people who are not accountable are members of the McGuinty government, and that's why we have the Auditor General. That's why the Auditor General comes in and looks at ministries that funnel money out the door with no application process, no criteria, no audit and no stated expectation of what's supposed to happen. And, lo and behold, a lot of the money falls into the hands of people who are well connected to the Liberal Party.

Minister, there are only a couple of ways the Auditor General can have this kind of special investigation. One is by the public accounts committee voting for it. Members of the McGuinty government took care of that today when you voted it down. Another way is for you to call for that investigation. So, Minister, if you're really interested in protecting the integrity of the groups you've referred to and making sure they are not tarnished with some of the other organizations that are so clearly connected to the Liberal Party, will you call for the Auditor General to immediately come in and conduct an investigation of your year-end slush fund and report before the election—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member opposite still has not apologized to a card-carrying member of the NDP who asked him to have the guts to stand up and apologize for the fact that he said that somehow she was connected to the Liberal Party when she's a lifelong member of the NDP.

He also is saying that these organizations, like Frontier College—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I will not warn the member from Niagara Centre again. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: He's saying that organizations like Frontier College, which provides all kinds of services throughout northern Ontario, and that organizations like United Jewish Appeal are dominated by Liberals. We have not looked at whether they're Liberals, NDP or Conservatives. We've looked at the outstanding track record of these organizations. Most of these organizations that we've funded have been funded by the Conservatives, the NDP and by this government because they have shown that they are part of the community and deliver important services.

The Speaker: New question. This is a lead question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Citizenship again: Minister, maybe you should hear what the Toronto Star has to say about how the McGuinty government is conducting itself: "[I]t is almost impossible to find out from Queen's Park what the money was spent on, how the organizations were selected, who chose them, and what steps were taken to ensure the money was spent properly...."

"That's why McGuinty should turn the books over to the province's Auditor General for a thorough examination."

Minister, my question is this: Why is the McGuinty government so afraid of Ontario's Auditor General conducting an investigation of your slush fund and making a report before the next election? What do you have to hide from the Auditor General, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: If you look at one very outstanding project we invested in and partnered with, it's with Frontier College. It has established literacy camps across northern Ontario to provide incredible opportunities for people from southern Ontario to engage in teaching our First Nations children about the love of reading. We've also invested in the Hellenic centre by the Greek community, an organization that has been in existence for about 100 years that is building an incredible new centre at Brimley and 401. If the member ever goes there he can see the great success they've had. The building is almost three quarters up. That's because of the partnership with the federal government and us. That is the evidence of the partnership that we're proud of.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, the McGuinty government's refusal to bring the Auditor General in to see which grants were legitimate and which ones went to Liberal partisans is tarnishing groups like the Frontier organization.

Again I want to quote the Toronto Star: "This ad hoc distribution of tax dollars is inexcusable. Taxpayers deserve a complete and immediate accounting of how their money has been used."

Quote again: "As disturbing questions about this program continue to percolate, it is time to shine a bright light on how Queen's Park doled out this money."

Minister, the McGuinty government already tried to shut down an investigation by the Auditor General today by your inexcusable behaviour in the public accounts committee. I'm asking you, will you bring in the Auditor General to conduct an immediate investigation of the slush fund before the election? What do you have to hide, Minister? Why—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I have been at the AWIC centre, as I mentioned yesterday. I've been at the London Cross Cultural Learning Centre. I've been at SISO in Hamilton. I've been to CultureLink. I go to the front-line service providers and I see, when a little bit of resources come from government, how far those volunteer-based organizations can take that money. Those are the investments that we've made. Those are investments we also make with our greater cultural groups so we can recognize the great diversity we have in this province. That's why we partner with the Hindu Museum of Civilization, where they're building the Wall of Peace. That's why we're partnering with some of the gurdwaras, which are doing exceptional volunteer work and charitable work. There's the evidence of our investment. That's the evidence of the integration that we strongly believe in, and the celebration of this great province from people all over the world.

1520

Mr. Hampton: Here's what the Globe and Mail has to say: "This has every appearance of being a Liberal slush fund, a way of cementing alliances ... before the October 10 provincial election.... The provincial Auditor General should take a tough look at where those millions have gone."

I think the people of Ontario would have a lot more trust in the Auditor General than they would have in the McGuinty government these days, given the way you conducted yourself at the public accounts committee today. So I'm going to ask you again: What is the McGuinty government so afraid of? Why are you so opposed to the Auditor General coming in, conducting an investigation and doing a report on your slush fund before the next provincial election is held in October? What are you trying to hide? Why are you so afraid of Ontario's Auditor General?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are organizations across this province that have been ignored by governments, and not just governments in the provincial Legislature; the federal governments of both stripes have never invested fairly in our newcomers in this province.

The NDP was totally silent when we stood up for newcomers across this province and said it was unfair that newcomers in Ontario, which takes in 60% of the newcomers from immigration—60% of immigrants come here. They were underfunded for two decades. The NDP never stood up and said anything about the fact that they were underfunded. Our Premier said it was not right that they should be underfunded. We fought hard. We were focused. Now that money is flowing to these programs with \$920 million the NDP didn't care about or talk about.

PETITIONS

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition that was delivered to me, originating with signatures from Our Lady of Grace Church in Aurora. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

As the proud proponent of that bill, I'm pleased to affix my signature to it and pass it on to Page Brendon for delivery to the table.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the" seniors "of Ontario request full access and control of their locked-in pension funds at age 55, without the current restriction imposed by government regulation;

"Whereas the current government regulation restricts what seniors and pensioners are able to do with their own savings and limits their options for an affordable and comfortable retirement;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government as follows:

"That the Ontario Pension Benefits Act be amended to give seniors of Ontario the option to transfer their locked-in pension funds (LIRA, LIF, LRIF) into an RRIF at the age of 55, as is the case for seniors in the province of Saskatchewan."

I agree with this petition. I've signed it and send it to the table by way of Page Lauren.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions about the dilapidated bridge, which I will read into the record.

"To the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

"Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge;

"Whereas this bridge ... will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

“Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding”—in fact, they turned us down—

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston.”

I want to thank all of those who signed this petition, and of course I will sign it too.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I’m glad to present this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. The title is: “Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report....”

It’s signed by a number of people in my community. I’m going to send them with Christian.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with lab services at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare. It says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of the communities served by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) wish to maintain current community lab services; and

“Whereas maintaining community lab services promotes physician retention and benefits family health teams; and

“Whereas the funding for community lab services is currently a strain on the operating budget of MAHC; and

“Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas the operating budget for MAHC needs to reflect the growing demand for services in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health increase the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to permit continued operation of community lab services.”

I support this petition.

1530

HERITAGE PROGRAMS

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:”—there are thousands of petitions here—

“Whereas the black cultural heritage program at the Toronto District School Board provides a valuable program where children in elementary school learn about the origins, history and the role of black people throughout Canada and around the world;

“Whereas since 1998, when the Conservative government took over the funding of education, the black cultural program has been at risk of elimination;

“Whereas a high percentage of students of African descent are feeling alienated and disengaged;

“Whereas the provincial high school dropout rate is over 40%, with black youth making up a large percentage of the dropouts;

“Whereas this program empowers students and parents and maintains a level of equity in education;

“Whereas when he was the opposition critic responsible for education, the current Minister of Education supported the funding of these programs”—this must be referring to Mr. Kennedy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide ministry funding for the black cultural heritage program. In the upcoming budget”

I support this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I have signatures on these petitions that I will be tabling.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and

address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds.”

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario’s lottery system for months, if not years;

“Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to ‘spin the scandal’ rather than fix the problems;

“Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system.”

I’m pleased to hand it over to page Dillon to be taken to the table.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which is part of several petitions which we have received.

“Whereas York region and the city of Toronto have witnessed a substantial increase in traffic gridlock over the last several years; and

“Whereas these two regions continue to face traffic gridlock, which is an overwhelming economic and environmental problem; and

“Whereas we are significantly disappointed with the position of the leader of the NDP who wants to cancel the Spadina-York subway extension;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all York region and Toronto MPPs do their utmost to have the Spadina-York subway extension construction start during the year 2007.”

I fully support the petitioners and their intent, and I will contribute with my signature to it.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 2000; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey.”

I agree with that petition and have signed it.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Let me tell you, thousands of Ontarians want us to regulate zoos and protect animals.

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly

“Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

That’s a fine bill, and all these people signing these petitions want to support it. I’ll affix my signature to the petition.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the parents of St. Paul’s elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

“Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul’s elementary school; and

“Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires

\$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

"Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve."

Of course, I went to that school, my mother taught there for 33 years and I certainly agree with the petition.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I support the bill.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker: I rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, April 30, 2007, the afternoon will be opposition day, standing in the name of the leader of the official opposition; in the evening, second reading of Bill 212, the Education Amendment Act.

On Tuesday, May 1, 2007, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 218, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act; the evening is to be confirmed.

On Wednesday, May 2, 2007, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 174, Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act, one of my favourites; in the evening, second reading of Bill 218, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

On Thursday, May 3, 2007, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 218, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

I'd like page Ali to come over here and hand this to the table, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL SAFETY), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (DISCIPLINE PROGRESSIVE ET SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 25, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety / Projet de loi 212, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne le comportement, la discipline et la sécurité.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to thank the citizens of Ontario for tuning in to this political forum. There's always plenty to learn, and today we're talking about an education bill. I want to recap some of the things I said yesterday, and then get to some of the elements of the bill.

I want to remind people that New Democrats were always very critical of the Conservatives' zero-tolerance bill. We attacked the government of the day; we attacked their policy. We attacked the notion of zero tolerance. We believed that the government of the day wanted to be a law-and-order government. As a result of that, their policies were called "zero tolerance," in order to show the public that they were going to be tough on bad behaviour in our schools—terrible behaviour, misbehaviour, bullies and so on.

1540

As a result of their policies, thousands and thousands of students were suspended and expelled—unbelievable numbers of students. Remember that under the zero-tolerance bill instituted by the Tories in the year 2000 and implemented in 2001-02, boards could have provided alternative programs in their classrooms to deal with difficult behaviour that may have occurred in the schools. Very few boards, however, chose to do that. The reason why few boards chose to do that, I believe, is because they felt teachers and principals in schools in general had a licence to suspend students, that they had a licence to expel students, that they had a licence to suspend them for uttering a threat, for inflicting serious bodily harm, possessing alcohol or illegal drugs, being under the influence of alcohol, swearing at a teacher, committing an act of vandalism, any other activity that is an activity for which a principal may suspend a pupil and bullying. Rather than dealing with those issues in school by providing alternative programs that dealt with that type

of behaviour, most schools, through principals by and large—here and there some teachers—decided to suspend students.

I disagreed with that because I always felt it was a mistake to kick students out of the classroom and throw them out into the streets for up to 20 days. What you allowed students to do was roam the streets and get into further damaging behaviour that, rather than correct bad behaviour, would bring bad behaviour back into the school again and again. But as I say, schools felt they had the licence to suspend under a law-and-order kind of government.

Similarly, schools, through principals, were allowed to expel for possessing a weapon—using a weapon to cause or threaten bodily harm, committing physical assault on another person, committing sexual assault, trafficking in weapons and committing robbery. These are serious, serious crimes that are committed against students. This is serious criminal behaviour, no doubt, and principals ought to have that ability—with some discretion, however—to be able to expel students.

But on the whole, most students were expelled. Rather than dealing with why it is the students bring that problem into the school in the first place, we simply expel them. Why? Because under the law-and-order kind of Conservative government we had, principals felt duty-bound to expel. They felt they had the licence to expel. Rather than forcing boards to look at the bill they had, which said you should look at alternative programming—very few boards did.

Yesterday I said it was the Durham board that provided alternative programming; I believe it was the York board. The old Toronto board that I used to be a trustee of allowed for alternative programming to happen in schools. Why? Because there's always a reason students commit certain problems; there's always a reason for bad behaviour. I know it's tough on principals and teachers to deal with that, but it's part of their duty as teachers and principals not just to teach but to help to deal with social problems.

I know it's a burden on the system. I know that teachers are not qualified social workers or psychologists. That's not their job. I understand that. Unfortunately, the job of a teacher today has been expanded to include other skills. You've got to be a social worker from time to time, you've got to be a policeman or policewoman from time to time, you've got to be a psychologist from time to time. Today that's part of the job.

But the government of the day didn't help. When the Minister of Transportation—the current Minister of Transportation—said of the Tories that the zero-tolerance policy was designed to get kids out of the schools, she was right. So the question I have of the Minister of Transportation and many Liberals, including the minister, is, why would it take you so long to deal with it? If the Minister of Transportation said that the zero-tolerance policy was designed to get kids out of the school system, why would you not apply that knowledge, that statement

to your own behaviour and say, "We've got to deal with the zero-tolerance policy. It's hurting our kids"? And why, Minister of Transportation and Minister of Education—both of whom have been trustees with the Toronto board—when you know that we've got to deal with this quickly and today and not some time in the future, would you say this bill comes into effect in 2008?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): So that they can get the programs in place, Rosie. You know that.

Mr. Marchese: Is that right? No, Minister of Education, I say implement today. If York region, under a Conservative regime, could implement programs that worked well, that you are familiar with, because you were a trustee and you knew about these things, if York region could do it under them, most boards could do it under you. You say you're so gentle and nice to them. Surely with all the billions of dollars you're spending, they could be ready today, not in 2008. If there is an urgency to the problem, as the Human Rights Commissioner said there was, why does it take four years, and why does it take yet another year to implement and enforce this bill? Why say to boards, "You don't have to do anything until 2008"? I don't get it.

The Human Rights Commissioner, years and years ago, before the year 2000, interviewed a whole lot of people—parents who had kids in the system. It was a thorough study, in my view. You could say, "Well, it wasn't as thorough as it should be." In my view, it was thorough. The Human Rights Commissioner of the day, Monsieur Norton, said thousands of black students were being discriminated on, thousands of black students were being profiled, thousands of black students were being kicked out, expelled and suspended disproportionately. He urged the government of the day to do a review of the Safe Schools Act, and it was an urging to the current government as well. He said thousands and thousands of students who have a disability—physical, psychological or intellectual—were being suspended and expelled disproportionately. Something is wrong. We should be helping out.

We have known for six, seven years that the zero-tolerance policy has not been working and particularly for two groups: people of colour and students with disabilities. We need to move fast on that. And we waited. Marchese called on this government years and years ago to move quickly to deal with this issue by bringing back discretion instead of zero tolerance. We said this in the year 2000, we said it in 2002 and 2003 and 2004 and 2005. We should bring back discretion instead of zero tolerance and kids getting kicked out. We said to Monsieur Kennedy and then Madame Papatello and now Minister Wynne, "Bring in mandatory alternatives for all suspended and expelled students, as the commissioner said we should do." I called upon the government years and years ago, and now they're bringing back mandatory alternatives for all suspended and expelled students. Now they're bringing back discretion instead of zero tolerance, which is much of what I told the Tories long ago and

much of what I've been pleading with Liberals to do for many, many years. But why does it take so long for the government to get to a position of saying, "Hmm, it makes sense. Why do I have to wait four years to have students continually being suspended and expelled when I can do something today?"

1550

What does the minister of the day do? Well, she commissions a group called the safe schools action team, because the minister and the Liberals say, "We need evidence. We need to study this. It isn't enough that NDP MPP Marchese tells us to do this. It isn't enough that the Human Rights Commissioner tells us to do this. It isn't enough that parents of colour told us, parents whose children have a disability—that's not enough. We need to be much more thorough. We need to pull together a team. We need to pay them well. We need to pay them for a long while to do a long study because we do have money and we can do that."

So the committee was commissioned to review the following: Consistency—

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, for your edification or predilection, I'm not sure.

The committee was commissioned to focus on a number of topics. This is very interesting. "Consistency: Data indicated that the safe schools legislation was not being applied consistently across Ontario. The rate of suspensions and expulsions varied widely among schools." Speaker, the reason I find it humorous is because I could have told the minister without having to waste money on a group of people who, with all due respect, are capable, if she had asked me; of course there is no consistency across Ontario. How could there be? There could never be consistency, because each board would apply different rules to their constituencies depending on region, depending on the kind of board it is, the leadership they've got, depending on the kind of principles they've got, depending on the kinds of professional development they do together. Of course, there is no consistency.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think the honourable member is speaking quite passionately about this legislation and there should be at least a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Clerk?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk: Quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member may now continue.

Mr. Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I welcome a few more Liberals to the House.

Here's another thing. The safe schools action team was commissioned to review the issue of fairness: "Some groups were seen to be more likely to be suspended or expelled than others." Hmm. "A number of concerns

were raised that the legislation and related school board discipline policies were having a disproportionate impact on racial minorities and disabled students." Hmm.

Isn't that funny? The Human Rights Commissioner said this very thing. I said that very thing. Parents said that very thing—people of colour, parents who have children with disabilities. So we commission this group to review something that we knew, that we know. So we hire this, with all due respect again, select group to write a report about things that we already know. I guess we have a lot of money to dole out and so we can do that.

The other matter of study is discipline. "There was a perception that there should be more judgment used when deciding to suspend or expel a student." Hmm. Isn't that interesting? Marchese said you should use discretion rather than expelling and suspending. Before you do that, perhaps you should look at mitigating circumstances. Perhaps you should look at what else you could do to keep those students in the school and to prevent behaviour from happening again.

So we commissioned, with all due respect again, this group of experts that we have to pay to produce a report on matters on which the human rights commissioner has responded, Marchese has responded and other parents. Further: "Prevention: There was a perception that safe schools legislation focused more on discipline than on preventing behaviours leading to suspensions and expulsions. More than 60 per cent of students who were suspended changed their behaviour and were not suspended again or expelled. However, there was a concern that not enough was being done to prevent the behaviours that led to suspension or expulsion."

Interesting, Mr. Chair—member from Peterborough—these are the four categories that we asked this expert panel to do a review on. You see, I find it amusing. My sense of why the government did that was to stall, delay.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): No.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, delay, stall. It's a technique not to do. "We commission a study for a year, a year and a half or two, and why do we do that? To give us time as a government to think about what we're going to do." So they produce a report that Marchese said you should have done five years ago, that the human rights commissioner said you should have done five years ago, and then I wonder, why do we do these things? How could parents and citizens not become cynical about what politicians and political parties do? It wasn't all that complicated. The government could have been done this years ago. But you know what? Here's my suspicion: The Liberals are afraid of the Conservative Party to a great extent, and let me explain why that is.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): We're dying to know.

Mr. Marchese: Monsieur Levac from Brant might appreciate this, and the member from Mississauga West. They both might appreciate it. He's dying to hear it. The Liberals do not want to be seen as not being tough on crime. They want to be at par with the Tories in this regard. They want to be seen, like the Tories, as being

tough on crime. To deal with the issue of zero tolerance by simply saying, "We are repealing that bill," would put you fine, tough Liberals in a position to be soft. You cannot be seen to be soft. You have to be seen to be tough. So for the last three years what have the Liberals been talking about? Bullying. Why? They need to be seen—Liberals, that is—to be tough. If you're seen to be tough on bullies, you'll create the image that you're like Tories, a tough-on-crime kind of an image. So have the Liberals achieved that? I just don't know that. It's a silly game, I've got to tell you. It's a silly political game: three years, five years of knowing that students with disabilities and students of colour are being suspended and expelled at disproportionate rates—five years of knowing that. The Liberals, in order to keep an image of being tough, have for the last two years, two years and a half, been talking about how tough they are on bullies. And, lo and behold, what do the Liberals do when they produce their bill just last week? They say, "We're going to be tough on cyber-bullying." The focus of the minister was entirely on cyber-bullying, not getting rid of zero tolerance but being tough, again, on bullying—but now a new phenomenon, cyber-bullying, which I support, by the way. Don't misunderstand me.

1600

Mr. Levac: I wouldn't.

Mr. Marchese: The point is, David Levac from Brant, the minister has to create and maintain this image of, "We've got to be tough" as a way of keeping the old Tories—because John Tory is a nice guy. John Tory is a real nice guy, right? But the other Tories, I've got to tell you, they're really tough, they really are, because they're a carry-over from the old regime. I don't have any illusions about where they stand. John seems to be a nicer man, a nicer guy. But the Liberals need to maintain this image—and, Minister, you are too, by the way. I like you a lot. I just want to put it on the record.

The Liberals need to maintain this image that they too are just like the Tories: Tough. So, Minister, I'm with you on cyber-bullying. I think it causes serious damage, and it does, because when someone can copy an image and send the image, it's hurtful. When someone can write about someone in a very deleterious way and have that e-mail go across the world in seconds, that causes serious damage, and it's mental harm that I believe needs to be stopped, and we need to prevent it. I don't dispute that; I support it.

My point is that it's all about bullying, right? It's that image. Why didn't we focus on the things that we said four years ago we should do? Monsieur Levac, from Brant, you and I both, we've been in the educational system. We know, right? I believe that you, member for Brant, were a good principal; I really do. I really do believe that you would have dealt with a student if there was a problem. You would have used your discretion. You would not have said to some student, "You're gone." My sense of you is that you would deal with the problem and you would do something else: You would probably attempt to understand what problems there were

outside of the classroom that were brought into the classroom. You would do that. I suspect that you would look at what social and economic issues we're dealing with. Does the child come from a background that prepares him or her to bring problems into the classroom? Does the child have a parent who drinks? Is there an alcoholic in that home? Are there two alcoholics in that home? Does that cause problems? Yes, it does. How does it hurt this child? In a very, very bad way. What can I do, as a teacher and principal, to help? "Let me reflect on what I could do" would be your answer. It would be the answer of a principal who really cares, and it would be the answer of a board that really cares.

What do we do when a board understands, a principal understands and a teacher understands that there's a possibility of mental illness, perhaps in the child, perhaps in the home? "Let me deal with that." A principal and a good board would know, "Maybe we've got economic issues in our school. Maybe we've got kids who are very, very poor. Maybe we have children who come in the morning and don't have breakfast." Does that cause social harm? Does that cause intellectual harm? Does that cause bad learning habits? Does it prevent kids from learning? All of that—yes, it does. A good principal, a good teacher and a good board would know that if you've got alcohol spectrum disorder—and 100,000 people suffer from that—that causes harm to the student and to those that he or she could hurt. Alcohol spectrum disorder is serious. Even doctors don't know how to identify it. Teachers don't know how to identify it. What does a teacher automatically do when a student comes from such a background? That student causes harm and doesn't know it. That student doesn't pay attention to the teacher. That student does not take direction from the principal or the teacher. Why? Because they cannot judge their behaviour. They are incapable of knowing they are doing wrong. But what does a teacher do, not knowing? A teacher who doesn't know immediately says, "This kid is so bad and doesn't listen—out you go."

Do we make an effort—as teachers, as principals, as school boards, as governments—to say, "We've got a problem. We've got to help"? We don't. Teachers are not expected to be psychologists; teachers are not expected to be doctors. I understand that. But we all have an obligation, as governments, as boards and as schools, to look at that as a serious issue. We don't do an adequate of doing that.

I sometimes do not blame teachers, and often I need to defend them. They are not required to be the things that I said they should be. In this day and age, a teacher's role has changed. Sadly, most of them—many of them—don't feel they need to be policemen and women, don't feel they need to be social workers or doctors, but they need to be. They need to look at their role in a much broader way.

But teachers need help. They can't do this alone. Principals can't do this alone, and this bill is going to impose more obligations on the principal than ever before. But I see it as a good thing, and I believe we need to support those teachers.

Good principals look at the socio-economic environment and say, "What could we as a school do to help?" Good boards do that as a matter of philosophy and as a matter of principle; some boards do not. I believe that having mandatory, discretionary programs built into a program that a child needs to have is a good thing.

I believe that before expelling a student, the principal needs to do a review, as the bill points out, and if that student needs to be expelled, it needs to go before the board. That puts tremendous pressure on the schools to deal with their problems locally. But as I said, it imposes tremendous pressure on the principal, because the principals have over the years absorbed many more responsibilities than they are capable of dealing with. And so sometimes, some things simply do not get done. This will add an incredible burden on principals.

In the same way, when you have to fire a teacher, it takes two to three years—and the member for Brant would confirm that with me. It takes two to three years to get rid of a bad teacher. The energy it takes from a principal to decide that some teacher is going to go based on incompetence is overwhelming, and that's not the only thing principals do. So now, for every student who gets expelled, they have to have a thorough individual review, and then it goes to the board. Imagine the expectation on the principal now. Can they do it? Will they do it? I don't know. It's going to be tough.

What kinds of alternative programs are we going to provide? We don't know; I don't know. The minister says, "Well, there will be guidelines."

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I don't, actually, Minister. I really don't. I get worried sometimes.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: But you were a trustee with the Toronto board. You know what they did.

Mr. Marchese: I agree with you. We did good things at the Toronto board. I was proud of the old board, at least, of which I was a member. Things did change after 1990, I must admit, with a few exceptions. And you, minister, would be one of them. I say that seriously.

It is true: The Toronto board used to have great mandatory alternative programs. Maybe the Minister will look at that. I'm not sure.

1610

I worry, because for the last three and a half years most boards did not provide alternative programs. So I say to myself, okay, why haven't they done that? In a Liberal regime, where the Liberal regime says, "We're friendly. We're nice. We love them. Oh, God, we spend billions of dollars on them," why wouldn't these boards say, "Okay, we're ready to do that, because we've got the right climate, we've got the right government"? Why didn't they do that?

When the minister says, "Marchese, you know that we're going to offer alternative programs and they're likely to be good," I say, hmm, I don't know. And if we have examples of the Toronto board that used to do good alternative programming and if we've got examples of York offering good alternative programming, why can't

we use those as models and say, "We're going to do it today. We're not going to wait until after the election; we're going to do it today"? What do you have to fear except, as you say to me, it takes time? Well, if other boards have done it years ago under a Tory regime, why can't we do it today?

Minister, I've got to tell you, I worry about the fact that you say there's going to be \$23 million for these alternative programs because I just don't know whether the money is real or whether the money is there, or going to be there, or whether that money is going to be taken from another pot and moved around for this. I really am doubtful. I know you have good intentions, but I'm really very doubtful of your government, because I've seen by the evidence that you move money around. And just like Minister Papatello said, we have solved the wage gap that Dr. Rozanski talked about. You know the wage gap that I'm talking about. Rozanski said it's a \$650-million gap between what governments give and what boards get to pay teacher salaries. And that creates a gap.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): We did.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, you said you did, right? I know. Minister Papatello said she did too. And Minister Wynne says she did too. But here is how you did it. This is why I mistrust you, because the government has—well, let me tell you. This is why I raise the doubts. You have stolen money from two programs: the local priorities amount and the learning opportunities grant.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I want to hear your argument extended when—are you doing a two-minute response?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I am.

Mr. Marchese: Okay, so we'll hear from the minister.

I'm doubtful because they stole \$500 million from the local priorities amount and the learning opportunities grant, stole that money—remember, these programs deal with kids at risk and all sorts of other local programs. They take that money out of that pot, bring it here, and solve the teacher gap. It's gone. But in doing what I say they've done, they have now created a gap in the local priorities amount and the learning opportunities grant, meaning boards no longer have any flexibility to provide the programming they used to. But the government says, "We solved the gap." You understand. The government is, I must admit, very adroit, very able, very, just to use a simple word, sneaky—that's simple; I think people understand that—in taking money and moving it around. And they call it new money.

I'm afraid the \$23 million is just going to be circulated money. It just moves around. And when we call it new, we can say, "God, we spend billions of dollars, billions," in the same way that the minister said just the other day that school boards and trustees—it's hard to say to them you can't do certain things, that they have the responsibility. If they want to be able to fix schools, repair them, build portables, they can. Now it's okay. And the minister said it's up to the trustees to determine equity. Sorry, government of the day, Minister: It's up to you.

You, government, you, Minister, determine equality among students across the board, across Ontario. It's not trustees who deal with equity issues; it's you. If we do not provide adequate central funding to all of the boards, we will produce inequality throughout Ontario, and that's what you've opened the door to. I find it baffling, incredibly baffling, that you would allow that. Minister Wynne, in this regard I'm a bit puzzled by you, because I didn't expect it from you. I would have expected it from Monsieur Kennedy, Madame Papatello, but not you, because I think you're a little more progressive than they are. In this regard, I believe you're terribly torn. I believe you are conflicted. In the way that you expressed yourself in the Toronto Star article, I believe you are conflicted. It says, "Wynne noted the province has given boards money that allows them to leverage \$4 billion for capital projects, which she called 'a good start.'"

Four billion is hardly a good start. If you actually spent \$4 billion, it would be an end to all of our capital programs; it wouldn't be a good start. The reason why the minister says it's a good start is because the money they claim is going for capital projects is not happening, and that is why the Liberal government, the McGuinty government, is quite happy to say to school boards, "It's okay. You can build whatever school addition you want. You can build portables, you can build classrooms, whatever you like. You can do it now." The private sector can go in, put its name somewhere on some new addition, and it's okay. This opens the door to a two-tier system, as People for Education said the other day. It opens the door for two-tier education. It opens the door for wealthy schools and wealthy boards to do what they want. It opens the door to poor schools not being able to do what they want and what they need. It opens the door for huge inequity. It's inevitable, ineluctably so. And you know this. This is why I know you are conflicted about it. I know that you are.

You've got to be very careful. You're going back to the good old days of 100 years ago, where the well-to-do could get what they wanted, and those others—too bad, so sad. This is a sad development, I need to tell you, in this Legislature today. I am profoundly worried about this new Liberal manoeuvre to deal with the issue of funding. Parents are going beyond the bake sale. Parents are going beyond the skip-a-thon. The bake sale was okay. Even a skip-a-thon was okay. But now you're saying to schools, "You can go out, get private money, and build what you want."

Madam Minister, this is bad. This is really bad. I know that if we had a private conversation, you would agree with me. I know that. I know the member for Brant would agree with me if we had a private conversation. I know that a few other members would agree with me as well.

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): Would you agree with us, Rosie?

Mr. Marchese: I'm disagreeing with you, though.

What's missing in this bill? Yes, they've now brought mandatory alternatives, which I called for five years ago;

discretion instead of zero tolerance, which I called for five years ago. We think that is okay. But if we do not deal with the social and economic issues that students bring into the classroom, we're not going to help a lot of students who come from low-income, troubled families, low-income parents who have difficulties and troubled families as it relates to alcohol, substance abuse, mental illness and very serious economic issues. If we do not deal with that, the policy that you've just brought in with this bill, where you're saying principals can suspend, yes, but if they need to expel, they have to do a thorough review and make recommendations—all that is good and we support it. But I'm telling you, what is missing in your bill is the following, apart from the other issues I raise that are extraneous to the educational system and that impinge on learning in the classroom.

We need the adults we used to have to provide support to many troubled students. Ms. Wynne, the minister, knows that when the Conservatives were in power we lost a lot of people whom she fought to maintain. Community advisers, youth outreach workers, attendance counsellors, social worker positions and psychologists in some places of the province were cut. We hoped the Liberals would restore those programs; they haven't.

1620

We need youth workers. Ms. Wynne, who came from the Toronto board, knows how helpful they were. We had meetings when the Conservatives, under Mr. Christie, their supervisor, made the cuts to the Toronto board in particular. I was there when she was a trustee, defending the trustees then. Both Liberals and New Democrats and, yes, even many Conservative trustees were defending them when the Conservative government was, through Mr. Christie, firing these people. The youth workers and the students who were affected and beneficiaries of their advice and help told us about how important they were, told us how youth workers were critical in allowing them to stay in the educational system. Youth workers were their connection to a reality that obviously around them did not exist. Youth workers were able to understand their problems, work with their problems and allow them to stay in the system and work them through, but it permitted students to stay in the system. When those youth workers disappeared, were fired, it meant that those students who were troubled, students at risk, had no one to turn to any more. They were abandoned and on their own.

We need youth workers. We need youth counsellors. We need social workers. These are the people who provide social support, mental support, someone who would listen to them, someone who might understand them, someone who might help them and hold them back before they decided that they were going to leave the system.

This is what's missing in this bill. The government might have made reference to them, might have talked about them in a way that would assure me that they're actually doing something to hold these people, but they're not. They didn't say anything. They haven't said

a thing. I worry, as we say that schools must integrate into the regular classroom more and more special education students, that this will create more problems for the regular classroom and the regular teacher. The policy of integration is great; without supports, it is a disaster.

If we do not support that teacher, if we do not have the required educational assistants to help out, if we do not have youth workers, if we do not have social workers, integrating more and more special education students into the regular classroom to save money is going to be a disaster. That's what this government is doing. To save money, we are encouraging more and more students to get into the regular classroom.

I am profoundly worried about this policy direction, and the supports are not there. We have not increased the number of educational assistants. As we entertain this policy of putting more special ed students in the regular classroom, it will hurt the regular student who doesn't have a social or intellectual problem. It will hurt the special-ed kid, who won't have the support from the teacher. It will hurt the teacher, who won't be able to deal with regular students and special education students, and it will hurt the teacher when they have to now absorb more ESL students, more special ed, more split classes. It will hurt everyone. We have more split classes than ever before. Split classes means that you join two grades together, and in some cases three. Imagine bringing two or three grades together at a time when we're integrating more ESL students and more special-ed students. What is a teacher to do? Monsieur Levac, you know that split classes are a serious problem.

Mr. Levac: We've had it for a long time.

Mr. Marchese: You might say we've had it for a long time. It is a growing phenomenon. We are getting more and more split classes. Many teachers are good and some teachers are not so great. Some don't know how to teach the different levels with the different problems that come into their classrooms. I don't blame them. It's a hard job. We're getting more and more of those problems in the classroom.

So I'm saying you're creating more problems for students and you're going to create a lot of problems for the principals who are going to have to deal with the issues of students who are going to be expelled and now have to be sorted out, talked to carefully, using thorough discretion to deal with those problems, and you won't have the people to help: not the educational assistants, not the youth workers, not the social workers, not the psychologists. We are in deep trouble, as a system, and if we're not careful, we're going to encourage more and more students to go to the private system. That's what I'm afraid of.

We need a healthy public system, and we need to fund it properly so parents can feel good and feel they don't have to resort to the option of considering a private school. Most of our students still stay in the public system, and I am profoundly happy about that. Our public system works. We need to make sure it works well, and we need to make sure it works better.

So I'm looking for a commitment from the minister, in her response, to the notion of bringing back—restoring—community advisers, youth counsellors, youth workers and social workers, and increasing the number of educational assistants in order to be able to help prevent problems before they become a problem or a worse problem in our educational system.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I am happy to be able to respond to the member opposite. I have to say that when I was a young mom on the Toronto board, he was a trustee on the Toronto board, and I have a lot of respect for the work he did as a member of that board.

Tempting as it would be to respond to some of the financial issues, where we're trying to have more transparency and the fact that we've invested in more education workers and more teachers in the system, I'm not going to get drawn into those parts of the debate, because I really want to focus on the issues around Bill 212 and around the programs we are putting into our schools and the questions he asked about why it has taken until now.

The reason it has taken until now to get this legislation in place and to move on this is that we really wanted to get it right; we needed to have a conversation. Although I personally have great respect for the member opposite, his opinion really wasn't enough on which to base government policy. We actually needed to talk to people around the province who have been working in the field, who know the impact of the previous government's legislation and who gave us advice and gave the safe schools action team advice on which parts of the legislation needed to be changed and made very clear to us that the programming for those students who were on long-term suspensions and expulsions was an important part of what we needed to put into the policy and into the legislation. The money that is going into the system is for exactly the supports the member opposite is talking about: the human resources to work with those students.

The last thing I would say is on cyber-bullying. I have no intention to set myself or our government up as being tough. What we're doing is drawing on the students in this province, on the expertise in this province, to talk about what the rules should be. The member opposite doesn't know what the rules should be, because he didn't grow up with the technologies our kids are growing up with, and we need to access that information so we can make the right decisions.

1630

Mr. Wilson: Just to respond to the comments from the member for Trinity-Spadina, I think he did a great job and he was very passionate in his one-hour remarks.

Certainly with respect to this legislation, I'm not completely sure what difference it's going to make. You still get expelled for the same reasons as in existing legislation.

Interjection.

Mr. Wilson: Well, you say there's no mandatory expulsion, but it seems to read to our researchers, the

people who are talking to us, that it is kind of mandatory expulsion. There's an interview with the principal and it's unclear what's going to happen after that, other than the kid may get sent to another school nearby.

Anyway, I do like the part about the bullying, cyber-bullying. I agree. I think you alluded to it in your remarks. But I want to say that one thing I do disagree with the member from Trinity-Spadina on is private schools. I have nephews and nieces who went to private school. I have a nephew and niece in Barrie who went to Trinity Christian School. I went to—we didn't call it private school, but certainly the separate school system—St. Paul's school in Alliston, which, by the way, Minister, needs to be fixed. I do petitions on it almost every day in this House.

But today was an unusual day when we had Mr. Fonseca's—

Interjection: Fonseca.

Mr. Wilson: —Fonseca's; sorry—resolution that said that in the opinion of the House the government was—or at least he thought the government was—so committed to public education that they're not going to give one cent to private schools. I just think that's wrong.

Every year I'm delighted to get invited to the convocations at the Christian schools in my riding. I'm always very, very proud of the students. I realize those parents still pay their money to the public or separate education system, really a double tax, because they choose to send their children to faith-based schools. I note that Stephen Alder, for example, was here from the Canadian Jewish Congress today, and as I walked out in the hallway, as thankfully we voted down this resolution that was against private schools this morning, they were certainly very happy that at least the Progressive Conservative Party stood up for them in this province.

Mr. Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to have a comment on the member from Trinity-Spadina.

This morning, I used this little bit of a trick. I have my glass of water here and it's empty, and the other one that I have is full. I see this as full, and, my gosh, look at what we're talking about again. It just happens to be another member of the NDP who sees the glass as empty. This is a full glass of water we're talking about here. Quite frankly, I know he thinks that. I know he realizes that the evolution that has taken place in the last three years is much, much better than what we had to face for the last eight years before we got into power, because what we're talking about here is an evolution, turning the Queen Mary around. Quite frankly, we were headed in a direction that I know he fought and he also knows that I fought and a lot of us in this place fought. As a matter of fact, a lot of us got involved in politics simply because of what we saw happening to the public education system.

Let's be very quick here: Since 2003—and I know the member does his homework, so I want him to check this out—there are 5,000 more EAs in the province than there were before 2003: 5,000 more EAs. Now, the member wants to talk about all the cuts that have been taking place. Let's make sure we're talking about the entire

province of Ontario, because before the funding formula was tweaked and changed and differentiated between where money was spent in the province of Ontario, there were very, very, very rich boards and there were very, very poor boards. I will say this, and I said this from the beginning: I did compliment the Tory government for making that change, to make sure that we spent equal amounts of money across the province of Ontario.

He's talking about social workers and psychiatrists and this worker and that worker. There were an awful lot of boards in the province that had never had one of those people in place. Now we're getting there. We're turning the Queen Mary around, and I think he knows the glass is full.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the Chair recognizes in response the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Marchese: The problem I've got with the Liberal way of doing things is that you guys crawl so slowly. Sometimes I think even turtles walk faster.

Member from Brant: 5,000 more EAs? Please. Send me the document, please. Mr. Speaker, are you with us here? The member from Brant said they have 5,000 new—this is additional—EAs. Correcto?

Mr. Levac: More.

Mr. Marchese: More than what?

Mr. Levac: More than 2003.

Mr. Marchese: More than 2003. So every year we saw an increase, not simply what you replaced but in addition to what we had. Is that correct?

Mr. Levac: That's correct.

Mr. Marchese: I need that research.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Some 7,600 more support workers.

Mr. Marchese: I know, but here's the problem: You keep on announcing that you've got thousands of more teachers, you've got thousands of more this and that, and I can never get an answer as to where they are, where they come—

Hon. Ms. Wynne: They're in kindergarten to grade 3 classes.

Mr. Marchese: No, no. Please, send me the documents so that I can table them here.

Mr. Levac: I'll get it.

Mr. Marchese: Are you sure? Before the election?

Mr. Levac: I'll get it next week.

Mr. Marchese: That's what I'm happy to hear.

The minister says that they needed more evidence from people out there before they could change this. I really don't believe they did. They basically returned to a policy we used to have before zero tolerance. Before the imposition of the Safe Schools Act, the authority to suspend a student was limited to principals and the authority to expel was limited to school boards. In both cases, the exercise of that authority was discretionary. That's what we had before. That's what we have now. Did we really need to wait that long? Did we really need to have a group go out and spend money, to pay them to do that and consult? Did we really need to do that? I don't think we needed to wait that long.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Delaney: If there is one topic, if one stands in this Legislature and wishes to debate, in which you know you're going to be listened to carefully and in which you know you're going to have a range of expertise among a wide variety of people to comment informatively, it's got to be education.

I'm standing here on a Thursday afternoon, where the week is winding down and with fairly few members in the House. I can look across and see a Minister of Education who was a very successful trustee, a minister who was a board CFO, a school principal, and another trustee. And I was a part-time sessional instructor at Ryerson and taught business statistics, Internet marketing and planning and budgeting. So I am in august company.

But this is about safe schools. I think many of us can think back on the safety aspect of a school and think of somebody who at some point said to us, particularly rudely, something like, "You're stepping on my side of the hall, jerk-wadder," or somebody who said, "Yo, I need my algebra homework by tomorrow or maybe somebody's going to get hurt."

Sometimes when we talk about safe schools, the things that we're addressing are blatant, and sometimes it's an undertone. It might be a withering look, it might be an elbow in the hallway. After all, I'm a guy, and I'm told that the really nasty stuff happens with the opposite sex.

So you sit in class and worry instead of paying attention and learning something. You toss sleeplessly in bed and you show up to school tired. You get on the school bus and you wonder who's safe to sit beside. And day after grinding day, you hate to get up in the morning and you dread going to school. That's not the kind of Ontario that we're here to build. That's not an education; that's a grind.

That's why Ontario needs to do something about it. That's why Ontario needs safe schools. That's what this debate is all about. It's a debate about safe schools and how that links to student achievement. It's important enough for Ontario to put \$31 million on the table in this fiscal year, and to say, "That's going to make our schools safer."

This bill is about legislative amendments that implement provisions of the Education Act. Those provisions would more effectively combine discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education. Those are the provisions that would say, "You can make a mistake and you can come back."

Student safety is not just the goal and not just a vision; student safety is the priority for Ontario and all of its education stakeholders.

I've talked about how it feels to be bullied and how much it truly is awful. This legislation also addresses the inappropriate behaviour that causes this kind of anguish.

1640

We have a champion in this Legislature in MPP Liz Sandals from Guelph-Wellington. She has a solid background in education. It was she who took the time to

consult her peers, parents, educators and also to follow up on the recommendations made by the safe schools action team.

What difference is a safe school going to make? It's going to keep kids in school. If you keep kids in school, then you go a big step toward addressing one of the real problems not only in this country but in every country, and that is that more than four out of five inmates in Canada's prison population are people who never completed high school.

There will always be dropouts who make good. Bill Gates did. In Mississauga, Iggy Kaneff did. Some of our outstanding citizens in every age started with little, worked hard all their life, got little formal training, and they did well. But it's not the way to bet. Mess up in school and you're much more likely to be on your way to a desperate, hand-to-mouth existence, with few resources and even less hope. And that's what this bill is about. It's about making sure that the resource is there, it's about being able to get up when you fall, and mostly it's about hope.

There are a lot of people who share that vision. I'd like to quote someone whom I've gotten to know very well: Emily Noble, the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. She says, "We are also pleased to see that the 'zero tolerance' philosophy has been rejected by the government.... Proposing a progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate student behaviour and providing programs for expelled students and those on long-term suspensions are progressive changes that allow students to continue their education while taking responsibility for their actions."

That last part is very important—the notion of taking responsibility for your actions. As you grow up and grow older, realizing that part of the act of becoming an adult is taking responsibility for your actions is one of the real strong points in this bill. It's one of the things that's going to really make a difference.

Among all of those who enter what's called a strict discipline program, more than three out of four exit for reasons that can be described as positive, including two thirds who achieve their goal, which is reintegration back into a regular school setting or obtaining their Ontario secondary school diploma while they're in the program. This is all about finishing what you've started. If you don't have that secondary school diploma, your visions and your horizons are going to be a lot, lot lower, and life will be colder and more brutal than it will be for your friends who stayed in school.

Many of our friends on the other side of the floor think similarly. Let me quote my colleague the member for Leeds-Grenville, who said, and I'll use his words: "I think if you have an appropriate locale for anyone who's ... consistently causing problems in the school system, you just don't want them out on the street." That's the main challenge, and that's the main outcome with this bill.

So among those protective factors that can assist youth in staying in school, these include alternative schools,

caring and supportive teachers, school climates that are caring and flexible, as well as proactive supports to students to remain in school. We don't want to chase you out; we want to chase you in. We want to engage you. We want you finding a way to learn. It doesn't matter how you do it; it just matters that you do.

Let's have another quote here. I'm going to quote Rick Johnson, the president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. When dealing with what he saw in this bill, he said, and I'll use his words: "The proposed legislative changes strike a responsible balance. They set out strong consequences for unacceptable behaviour and, at the same time, put in place alternative programs that allow students to continue their education while learning accountability for their behaviour. The proposed legislation supports boards in building more creative and flexible approaches to addressing the complex issue of discipline." I couldn't say it better.

Earlier, my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, a man who is passionate about education—we may not always agree, but no one will ever question his passion and, I might say, his integrity. He did, however, err very slightly, so let's correct the record here. There are not more portables since 2003, something that out in the city of Mississauga I'm pretty sensitive about. In fact, there are 1,156 fewer portables since 2003.

On fixing schools, there are 6,771 repairs completed or underway since Good Places to Learn was initiated. I know that in the city of Mississauga I've walked into a lot of those schools and I've seen the difference that they can make in the learning environment and how buildings in which the plant itself may be old can be rejuvenated and given a second life and brought up to standard and made to be places that kids enjoy coming to learn.

In my final moments, I'd just like to provide a little outline of some of the other improvements in this bill.

Boards will be provided with \$20 million for supports to address inappropriate behaviour, including supports for all expelled students and students serving long-term suspensions. In other words, programs would be designed to address the causes of the problem behaviour and allow them to continue learning outside the classroom.

Speaker, I could go on, but I am running out of time. I thank you for your indulgence, and I look forward to voting for this bill.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm pleased to have a chance to respond briefly to the member for Mississauga West. He offered his opinion of Bill 212, of course, this afternoon and spoke in support of it and spoke in support of the process and the policy.

I was very pleased to be here this afternoon when our party's critic for education, the member for Oak Ridges, took an hour to respond to the minister and the minister's parliamentary assistant and their presentation on this bill. Our critic offered the perspective of our party, which was to suggest that we will support the intent of this bill and that we hope it will be sent to committee so that there

will be an opportunity for some further discussion. I realize that there has been a great deal of consultation, and the member for Mississauga West talked about that.

But I think I would also have to question and raise the issue that was raised earlier by the member for Trinity-Spadina: Why did it take more than three and a half years for this government to bring forward this legislation? When you look at the priorities of the government and when you look at the last three and a half years, some of the bills that were brought forward ahead of this would have to be considered very questionable priorities, perhaps urgent political matters the government wanted to attend to at that point in time. But given the fact that we're very much in the lead-up to the election, this bill seems to be rather late in the four-year cycle. I would ask the member for Mississauga West, would he agree that it's taken a long time to get this bill before the House, and would he in fact suggest that this bill should have been a higher priority on the government's agenda when they won the election in 2003? I would ask him if he would agree that this bill should have been a higher priority or not.

Mr. Marchese: I have just a few brief comments to the member for Mississauga West.

He made the point that this bill is about forcing students to take responsibility for their actions. Actually, this bill is about forcing teachers and principals to help students take responsibility for their actions. Without teachers and principals helping those students, in most cases, some of those students can't do it on their own. They need help. Most students don't on their own decide, "I'm just going to go cause havoc today." Some do, but most have a reason. The reason is connected to some causal thing that forces them to do that. It's our job as a system to help. If we help them and we correct that behaviour and that misbehaviour is not repeated, we help that student, we help the school, we help everyone—we help society. So I wanted to simply add that to your comment.

1650

To correct your record a little bit, your claim is that you put so much money into capital projects. Let me explain why that is not accurate. The Tories did a study in 2002 and said you should spend \$4.2 billion. Minister Kennedy said three years ago that he was putting aside \$275 million to leverage \$4 billion of capital projects. The first phase was supposed to be \$75 million. You haven't even completed your first phase. You didn't even spend more than \$25 million. Your \$75 million would have generated \$1.2 billion worth of capital expenses, but you haven't even spent \$25 million, so far behind are you. That's how bad it is.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: The member for Mississauga West has painted a picture of the pain of a victim of bullying, and I think it's really important that we all pay attention to that, because the reason that we need to change this legislation and the reason that we need to update the concepts in it are to do with those individual children that the member for Mississauga West was talking about. We

can't afford to ignore the fact that there are kids who are suffering in our schools because of the behaviours of other students, and we need to make sure that supports are in place for those kids. So the addition of bullying as an infraction that has to be looked at very seriously and for which suspension must be considered is absolutely a move in the right direction. It has nothing to do with a façade of political toughness; it has to do with the reality that kids in school need to take this seriously.

What we did before we brought in the legislation was, we put a whole anti-bullying strategy in place. We put money in the system, and resources for schools to start training their teachers and the kids in the schools about what bullying is. We put supports in place for the victims of bullies and the bystanders, because bullying is a very particular phenomenon where there's a role for the bully, there's a role for the victim, but there's also a role for bystanders, and the community needs to understand—by that, I mean the other kids in the playground need to understand—what's going on.

I just want to make a quick point about the member for Trinity-Spadina's issue around the capital that we've put into the system. The reality is that boards have got money to spend. There are over 6,000 projects going on around the province. The fact is that the boards haven't been able to spend all the money fast enough. That's what we know. The money is there. They're working on it, they're working to get that work done, and the schools are in much better shape than they were in 2003.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the Chair recognizes, in response, the member for Mississauga West.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you again, Speaker. Quite often the responses are not so much in accord as they are today.

To my colleague from Waterloo-Wellington, a gentleman whom I always enjoy following in debate—and it's a privilege to have him follow me—we'll take your support any way you choose to express it, and we thank you. With regard to some of the points he raised, the "could have," the "should have," or the "would have" aside, it's here, it's now; let's vote for it.

To my colleague from Trinity-Spadina—this is easy—I'll take his point that the emphasis is on helping teachers, principals and parents correct student behaviour; fine. When he talked about capital projects, I can talk about capital projects, because I've been in them, and I've been in them talking to the students in places like Ray Underhill in Streetsville, like Vista Heights, where I've looked at the difference in the facilities between the time that I first went in there in 2003 and the time that I last went in there several weeks ago. If somebody says we're not moving on capital projects, I respectfully beg to disagree. I can see them. They are there in my board, and I'm proud of them.

To the Minister of Education, your sentiments echo the many meetings that I've had with parents who have come to see me. Our focus has always been and will

always continue to be the children who are our future. Alberta has oil; we have the grey matter in the generation of the children to follow us, and it's our challenge to take that grey matter and turn it into the wealth, the prosperity, the hope, the vision and the future of the province of Ontario, the place that we're all so proud to call home.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for further debate. The Chair recognizes the esteemed member from Waterloo-Wellington.

Mr. Arnott: I thank Mr. Speaker for that characterization. I appreciate that, and I'm pleased to have the chance to speak briefly on Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety. This bill was introduced in this Legislature fairly recently, on April 17, which is just a few days ago, and second reading debate commenced yesterday. I was pleased to be present in the House to hear much of that debate. I heard the Minister of Education; the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph-Wellington; the member for Oak Ridges, who, as I said earlier this afternoon, serves as our party's education critic; and I heard part of the leadoff speech from the member for Trinity-Spadina, the NDP education critic amongst other critic responsibilities.

I actually feel something like what the NDP members feel every day. I'm doing triple or quadruple duty today. I'm supposed to be in a standing committee right now, the finance committee that's sitting, but we are a bit short-handed this afternoon, so I have the chance to be in the chamber right now to speak to this particular piece of legislation.

I come to this debate as a member of the Legislature who has been privileged to serve here now for 17 years, and I'm very honoured to do so. I come to this debate as the spouse of a teacher. My wife, Lisa, has taught in the public system for approximately 20 years. It's hard to believe, but that's true. She currently teaches at James McQueen Public School in Fergus. We are blessed with three young boys, who are in the public system. My son Jack is almost 12, my son Phillip is almost 10 and my son Dean is eight years old, all of them in the public school system. So I come to this debate as a legislator, as the spouse of a teacher and as a father and a parent who cares about the education system and has always been supportive of the public system of education.

When I think back through the years, I've had the opportunity to raise many education issues in the Legislature. There was even a time when the teachers' federations used to come to me asking for my assistance on issues. I hope that in the future that opportunity will exist for me again, because I think that the teachers' federations and the teachers have, obviously, a great deal to say about these issues and that we should be listening to the front-line teachers with respect to education issues because of the fact that by virtue of their position they have a great deal to offer us in terms of advice. I would hope that we can avail ourselves of those opportunities in the future.

I know that we had some difficult years when our party was in government with respect to working with the teachers' federations. But from my perspective, my door was always open to the teachers' federation representatives, and it still is. Again, it's my hope that if we do form the government again, a new relationship can be forged that is mutually beneficial. From my perspective, that's my hope and my objective.

The context of this debate, of course: We are now past the midway point of the third year of the government's mandate. In six months' time, as a matter of fact—it's hard to believe—the election will be over, the signs will be down and a new government will probably be in a transition period. It's our hope that John Tory becomes the next Premier of Ontario, but that's a subject that we won't get unanimous consent on right now in this House. But there will be a new government no matter what, and we look forward to that opportunity and hope to be in a position to form the government at that time and demonstrate new leadership in this province.

Again, when you look at the timing of this piece of legislation, when you consider that more than three and a half years have passed since the election of 2003, we still have to raise again and question the priorities of this government. They would have us believe today that this is a high priority of their government, yet it took them more than three and a half years to bring the legislation forward.

When I look at the issue of safe schools, I believe that whatever we do as a province and whatever we do as a Legislature, whatever the government does, should be guided by five principles. The first principle, I would suggest, should be that our schools must be made as safe as possible for our students. That goes without saying. I think there's general agreement in the House that that's an important principle that must guide any discussion of safe schools. Our students need and deserve a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Obviously, we have to ensure that the classroom environment allows for learning to take place. It follows, I guess, that destructive influences in our classrooms need to be addressed and overcome; otherwise, learning suffers.

Another important principle that needs to guide our actions in this respect is the fact that discipline is necessary in every classroom. All students need to understand that inappropriate behaviour will have consequences, including the withdrawal of privileges that they might value, and that positive behaviour, on the other hand, will be rewarded and appreciated.

1700

Another point that needs to be brought to the attention of the House with respect to principles in this regard is the need for an acknowledgement that bullying is a serious problem and it needs to be confronted.

I had the opportunity for approximately a year to serve in this Legislature as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. My colleague the member for Kitchener-Waterloo served as the Minister of Education in the last year of the Ernie Eves government. The issue

of the Safe Schools Act was something that we were working on even at that time. We knew that the Safe Schools Act, having been in place for approximately a year, needed to be carefully monitored and closely followed to ensure that its objectives were being met and that if there were any problems or issues that needed to be addressed, we should do that.

Listening to the member for Oak Ridges yesterday talk about the fact that every piece of legislation is, in effect, a work in progress—many of these issues have to be revisited constantly so as to ensure that the stated objectives of the legislation, as they were originally laid out and prescribed, are being met. If they're not, we have to accept that and bring forward legislation that corrects those problems.

I want to raise the question as to whether or not Bill 212 adheres to the five principles that I talked about, and raise that as a question. Over the course of this debate we'll have an opportunity to hear from more members, and I would hope that those issues will be addressed and answered.

That this bill was the subject of considerable consultation, obviously. I look at the list of people who participated on the safe schools action team, which was headed up by the parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph-Wellington. Also participating in that group were people like Dr. Debra Pepler, who is a professor of psychology at York University and a senior associate scientist at the Hospital for Sick Children, someone who brought a great deal, I'm sure, to the discussions; Mr. Stu Auty, the president of the Canadian Safe Schools Network, who is a noted expert on these issues and the issues of bullying—I've met Mr. Auty in the past and I'm pleased that he was participating in this process; Ray Hughes, the national education coordinator, Fourth R Project, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Centre for Prevention Science—obviously a professional who would have brought a great deal to the discussions as well; Dr. Inez Elliston, member of the board of directors of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation; and Lynn Ziraldo, the executive director of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, York region, and former chair of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education.

I would like to express my appreciation to the individuals who served on the safe schools action team. I think they're all excellent people who worked, I'm sure, very, very hard, because when you look at the months of consultation that went into this process, the number of communities that were visited and the number of hours that must have been put into the consultation, obviously a great deal of work was done.

I want to express, on behalf of our caucus, and reiterate the position that we have taken as a caucus with respect to Bill 212. We have said that this bill is long on rhetoric and short on substance. On the one hand, the education minister has said that the bill would end mandatory suspensions, yet we're advised that the bill makes some mandatory suspensions for the same list of activities as was the case in the previous bill.

The minister apparently stated during her media conference when this bill was announced that alternative programs for suspended and expelled students would be voluntary, but the bill states that they would actually be mandatory.

Our caucus has said that we support the appropriate supports for students together with resources to schools to assist students facing challenges, and this must be implemented. However, apparently not one cent of the \$31 million that's committed in the education minister's announcement goes towards these programs that would help students.

The other big concern we have that we need to put forward and I hope the government will acknowledge and respond to is that the Ontario Principals' Council's safety concerns in our schools have not been addressed. There's an issue regarding the lack of supervision created by the last contract that was signed with teachers, in which supervision minutes were significantly reduced. I know that most members of the House would have been visited by members of the Ontario Principals' Council a few weeks ago when they were here, and I certainly appreciated the advice I received from the principals. Their advice, I would suggest, would be advice that we should listen to and not dismiss. Each principal is the leader in their school and obviously they've got a great deal to say about this issue too, and we would want to listen to what they have to say.

Thinking about what happened yesterday with respect to the comments by the member for Oak Ridges, I thought he was absolutely right when he made reference to the fact that when we brought forward the original Safe Schools Act—as the provincial Progressive Conservative Party and as the government of the day—we were endeavouring “to provide a safe environment within our schools; second, to provide the necessary supports to teachers, principals and administrators within our school system to be able to deal with the challenges of supervision, to be able to deal with the challenges of students who were creating problems within the school environment because of their behaviour; and the intent of providing alternative programs for those students who were unable to function within the normal classroom environment and for whom a very express provision was being made through that legislation and through the corollary announcements relating to alternative programs of the day.”

That was the stated intent of the government when the Safe Schools Act was brought forward. Again, I think all of those expressed intentions were good ones, and we were trying to respond to issues that were being brought forward to our attention at that time. I do recall speaking to a number of teachers who had felt that discipline in the classroom was a huge problem, that their hands were tied, in many respects, in terms of dealing with some of the disruptions that they wanted to address so as to ensure that the other students in the classroom would be in an environment that was conducive to learning, as opposed to constant disruptions.

I know the member for Oak Ridges has said that all legislation—most legislation—is in fact a work in progress, and I would agree and concur with that. From time to time, there need be changes and adjustments. Certainly, we're not prepared to stand here and suggest that the Safe Schools Act as we presented it at the time was perfect and that it doesn't need a change in 2007, because evidently there need to be revisions.

The member for Oak Ridges also pointed out that there were 152,626 students suspended in 2005, or 7.2% of the entire student population, which is a significant number of students, obviously. But he talked about the fact that 18% of that number were special-needs kids, and that we needed to ensure that for these students—who were being suspended, in some cases, perhaps based on questionable situations—supports were there to ensure that they would get the education they deserved so that they could reach their full potential. I would certainly concur with that.

If we go back to the intent of the bill, Bill 212, we see that “the bill repeals sections 306 to 311 of the Education Act and replaces them with new provisions that substantially alter part XIII of the act with respect to the suspension and expulsion of pupils.

“If a pupil engages in an activity set out in new section 306, a principal may suspend the pupil for up to 20 days. The list of activities mirrors the list in old section 306, with the addition of bullying. Beginning in February 2008, the principal will be required to assign a pupil suspended under the section to a program for suspended pupils provided by the board. A suspension imposed under new section 306 can be appealed to the board in accordance with new section 309. On an appeal, the board either confirms the suspension, reduces the length of the suspension or quashes the suspension.”

The bill also provides for the fact that “if a pupil engages in an activity set out in new section 310, a principal must suspend the pupil for up to 20 days. The list of activities mirrors the list in old section 309. Following his or her suspension of a pupil under new section 310, the principal must promptly conduct an investigation, as required under new section 311.1, to determine whether to recommend to that board that the pupil be expelled.”

That is part of the explanatory note which sets out the intent of this bill and allows for us to look at the changes the government is proposing.

1710

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to point out as well some of the additional comments that were made by our party's critic when he led off in his speech yesterday afternoon. He spoke of the need to ensure that situations like the tragedy that took place a few years ago with a 16-year-old student named Andrew Stewart would never be repeated. He reminded us that Andrew Stewart lost his life tragically, defending a friend against a gang of thugs just steps from East York Collegiate, where Andrew was a student.

Interruption.

Mr. Arnott: I hope someone will answer the telephone.

Mr. Wilson: Some group wondering where their slush fund money is.

Mr. Arnott: Well, the member for Simcoe–Grey has talked about the behaviour that took place in the House this afternoon. Most of the members who are here now would probably agree that in the behaviour that took place in the House this afternoon, we were not at our finest moment as a Legislature. I think you see some of the behaviour—when I look at it from where I sit in the Legislature and I hear the comments of some of the cabinet ministers, and you think of the time that we've served here and the behaviour that's taken place in this Legislature, again, in particular, cabinet ministers have been some of the worst-behaved members during question period in the last three or four weeks. That's my perspective from sitting here, and I think most objective members—perhaps the Liberal rump would see that as well. It's most unfortunate and surprising when we're talking about safe schools. You think of the students who saw the behaviour in the House today and how they would respond to it. We talk about discipline. We talk about, in the context of this bill, behaviour in the classroom. Certainly behaviour in the Legislature leaves a lot to be desired at times. I think you would have to expect that the cabinet ministers would show a high standard of decorum because of the virtue of their office and representing the ministries that they do and the opportunity and the serious responsibilities that they carry. It's most unfortunate that in many cases their behaviour leaves something to be desired.

Returning to Bill 212, I want to suggest that we have to ensure that this bill goes to committee. Even though we support it in principle, as the member for Oak Ridges said, and I think most of the members from our caucus will concur with that, the committee process is an important one whereby public hearings can take place and further public discussion by experts on this issue and other educational matters can be brought forward. It gives us an opportunity, at committee, to bring forward amendments and suggestions and changes and further refinements to improve the bill. I would suggest that and would hope the government is willing and prepared to send this bill to a committee.

I realize that we're getting near the end of the spring sitting of the Legislature. It would appear that the government is more and more employing time allocation motions in order to try to expedite the flow of legislation. It's certainly a rumour within this place that perhaps we won't continue to sit right up until the end of June, as we normally would. We have a constituency week break in late May and we would expect to be back here in June. I certainly would expect to and would hope to have the opportunity to continue to do the work of this Legislature and this provincial Parliament so as to ensure that the government is held to account. I would hope the government is not contemplating shutting that down. I wouldn't be surprised if there are some backroom advisers in the Premier's office and perhaps their campaign team who are encouraging the Premier right now to

shut the House down as soon as possible because of the fact that the question periods, day after day, are yielding the deficiencies and the drawbacks of the government and demonstrating that to the people through the media. I'm sure that those discussions are taking place, but I would caution the government not to do that, obviously, because if they expect to go to the people in the summer months and the month of September asking for another mandate from the people of Ontario and they aren't even prepared to finish out the existing one, I think the people of Ontario will respond in a way that will surprise some of them.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It seems to me that the topic under discussion is Bill 212, and that doesn't seem to be what the member opposite is speaking to.

The Acting Speaker: The member can consider that, because we're debating the bill.

Mr. Arnott: I'm glad to catch the attention of the Minister of Education. I hope she's not one of the ones who are in fact advocating within the government to shut the House down sooner. I'm not sure if the government is prepared to time-allocate this bill in order to ensure that it gets through before the May 24 weekend or what, but I would suggest again that it's important that we have the opportunity, as a Legislature, to do our work in the month of June and hold this government to account.

So I appreciate your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for hearing me on Bill 212.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I had an opportunity to comment briefly on this bill a few days ago, and wanted to say that in terms of hearing some of the debate earlier, some of the comments from my colleague Rosario Marchese, I can see where this bill, which essentially takes us back to the situation we were in before the Safe Schools Act, before the zero tolerance—there are elements here that are simply common sense. Frankly, one has to ask, if they're simply common sense, why they weren't implemented a number of years ago, why it took this government almost to the end of its term to actually deal with a problem that was identified before 2003.

We knew what the problem was. We have an expulsion of disabled students, we have an expulsion of racial minorities, far in excess of their numbers. We have social problems in our schools that can't be dealt with simply with suspension or expulsion. We take the problem, we move it out of the classroom, we put it on to the street, but the problem continues. This bill, notwithstanding comments to the contrary, is not going to solve those larger problems. It will be a mechanism that will allow principals to intervene for brief periods to move problem students out of that school. The expulsions are suspended. Essentially now a principal has to go to the board of education to get an expulsion. In practical terms, that will happen far less frequently simply because it's so much more of a problem to do. But when you actually

get down to the heart of it, unless this government deals with the elements that drive the destructive behaviour, this bill will not deal with it.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I'm happy to respond to the member for Waterloo–Wellington's comments. I think, given the debate in the House today, I would expect all-party support for this bill when it comes to the vote. Certainly the member for Waterloo–Wellington was back-peddalling very quickly on the legislation that his party had put in place.

The argument about the timing of this bill: You know, we've had a very busy legislative agenda. We have been a very activist government. I think that with any legislation that we've brought forward in the last few months of this year, we might have said, "Well, why so late?" The fact is, we've been busy since we came to office in 2003. This has been a priority. The fact is that if the party that the member for Waterloo–Wellington is part of had done the kind of consultation that we did with the safe schools action team, then the legislation would not have been such a mess to start out with. What we had to do is to unravel the mistakes that were made. Having said that, the way we do business is that we go out to people who are experts in the field, people who are in the field doing the work in our schools, and we ask them what the impact of the legislation has been, where they think we should go, and we've worked that into our response in terms of the legislation.

On the issue of money for the programs, the member suggested that there isn't money for the programs. That's just not the case: \$23 million of the \$31 million is going to programs for students which were not required by the previous government in the legislation. That's why we've put that money in place.

As far as the mandatory suspensions and mandatory expulsions, there are no more mandatory expulsions, and the mandatory suspensions are for a very small number of serious incidents for which then there is a consideration of an expulsion. We really have moved away from that very flawed notion of zero tolerance to a Liberal concept of—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to join in the debate today and follow the member from Waterloo–Wellington, who has three boys of his own and I'm sure knows the education system quite well and the challenges that—

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I have three too, Laurie.

Ms. Scott: The Minister of Education says she has three, too, so we have lots of experienced input. Everybody's got their hands up. This is good.

1720

The member for Waterloo–Wellington had to go to committee, so I apologize that he couldn't stay here for his last two minutes to wrap up his comments, but I'm sure he'll read the Hansard and consider the feedback he's been given on Bill 212.

My colleague the member from Oak Ridges—and our critic for education—delivered a very good presentation yesterday in response to the bill. Certainly we are supportive in principle and we appreciate the consultation that was done on this bill. There were some concerns brought forward, but I know we'll be going to committee, I think, with this bill. Am I getting the nod that we're going to committee with this bill?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Absolutely.

Ms. Scott: Okay, just to hear some concerns, to make sure that we get the process right.

Certainly we're all supportive of any measures to promote school safety and also to provide safe environments. I know there have been alternative programs that I've had the opportunity to visit at the schools—I have two school boards in my riding—and the very creativeness that exists within that school board and with the teachers to deliver alternative programs to some of the children who need that extra assistance and for whom the classroom's just not the right space.

My brother is a teacher who teaches virtual learning. That has been an excellent tool that has been offered to children and students, for whatever reasons, and it has been involved in the adult education programs that exist in the Trillium Lakelands District School Board.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the bill and apologize that the member from Waterloo–Wellington did have to go to committee.

Mr. Levac: I'd love to have an opportunity to continue to talk about the bill. One of the things I forgot to do, and I should have done, is to thank the minister for actually changing and correcting and improving the situation with our kids. I was a principal during the time period in which this draconian kind of attitude came in about kids. It was basically, "If they step out of line, throw them out," and for 25 years, I wanted them in. I spent all my time trying to make sure they understood that staying in was the answer.

What we've got now is somebody who's turning that ship around, and we should be sitting back and—I'm faintly hearing from both parties that they are begrudgingly saying, "This is the right direction we want to go, but you're all wrong." I just can't understand the logic, but like I said before, that's the empty glass we're hearing in a lot of the talk over there, and I prefer the full glass.

Let me tell you something very specific about some of the things that the very creative principals have been doing across this province. Contrary to a lot of talk over there that the principals don't know what they're doing, they're the ones who have been coming up with some of these really creative ideas to keep kids in schools. They're the ones who actually visit the homes. I know. A lot of my friends are principals. They actually get out of the office and visit the home to say, "How can we help? What can we do?" They're reaching out. They're telling them that we believe, strongly and firmly—and that's the message about the full glass, that every single kid in this

province deserves a chance. That's what we're talking about.

Are there students who make it very difficult for teachers and principals and their own parents? Sure, there are students like that out there, and we need to deal with them. We need to suspend them and we need to expel them. But what we're trying to say is, we're not giving up on them. How old are these kids? They're 14, 15, 16 years old, and we're saying, "We're going to give up on you"?

I thank you, Minister, for having a lot of faith in our kids. I know they're going to get the message. We're getting everybody onside, and we're going to have a better system for it.

The Acting Speaker: Time for a response. Seeing none, the Chair recognizes the member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Tabuns: I had thought there would be one more comment from the opposition benches.

As my colleague the critic for education, Rosario Marchese, said, when the Safe Schools Act came in proposing zero tolerance, our party opposed that bill because we knew it would result in what we see today, and that is that young people, children, who are problems, who come from problematic backgrounds, would be expelled onto the streets where the problems they had would continue to manifest themselves, would continue to cause problems for society as a whole.

That was something that was recognized by the Liberals when they were in opposition and something they talked about in the last election, something they said they were going to take action on. It's four years later, almost time for another election, and finally there's legislation before us. It's an awful long wait to see action on a problem that is broadly recognized, broadly understood and, frankly, a problem where, in a number of school boards—and I mean school boards in York and the city of Toronto—action was taken and a model was available that the government could simply have looked at, brought forward in legislation and implemented years ago. That would have made a lot more sense, because we're going to continue to see students expelled without the programs being in place to look after them. We've gone through a number of years of it. Now, at this very late date, we're seeing action.

We know that previously principals felt they had a licence to suspend. There's no question that there are circumstances where, for the safety of children in the classroom, principals should exercise that power. But for the safety of the children who are suspended or expelled and for the safety of society as a whole, there was not the safety net, the backup programs that would actually make a difference. Thus, we had an approach to education, an approach to our young people, that exacerbated the problems.

What we see now is principals being given the power to suspend on their own, which we have no opposition to, and the power of expulsion being put in the hands of boards—appropriate enough. But the change that needs

to come in terms of supporting those students, making sure the programs are there for them so that the social problems that they're already wrestling with which cause destructive behaviour—those programs won't be required until 2008. I don't see why we waited all these almost four years and why this government is continuing to put the resolution, this solution approach, off into the future.

We all know that if children come in hungry, they are not going to learn well. If they don't learn well, if they're bored, if they're restless, they'll get in trouble with other students, they'll get in trouble with their teachers, and then the provisions of this act will come into effect. That's far down the road—very far down the road.

We've had debate in this chamber about the national child benefit, the one that's being clawed back by this government and will be clawed back for a number of years to come, so that children who are hungry today because the money they should have had in their household so they can eat properly will still not be with them. We know that if kids are hungry, they won't learn well; we know that they'll be disruptive. We also know that if their housing circumstances are poor, if their lives are chaotic, if their parents' lives are chaotic, that will impact on, will affect, the way they act in school.

I remember, a number of years ago, reading statistics about academic performance in American cities and finding that children who lived in public housing in the United States, as poor as that housing generally is, as problematic as that housing generally is, had higher academic performance levels than poor children living in private housing because, notwithstanding all the difficulties they faced, at least there was the stability of knowing that they had a landlord who was not going to be trying to force them out for speculative interest and, generally speaking, because their rent was subsidized so that their families could better afford making sure that they had a roof over their heads.

1730

We have tens of thousands of people on the waiting lists for affordable housing in this province, and we're seeing, at best, an anemic effort on the part of the government to resolve that problem. The underlying forces and dynamics that drive destructive behaviour in the schools are there, they're continuing to fester and grow, and at the same time we're told that these problems will be dealt with by having this bill brought forward. I don't oppose the bill. What I do say, though, is that if you don't have a concerted effort to deal with all those other problems, then you don't get rid of the problem at hand; you simply move it around.

I had an opportunity the other evening to be at a meeting in my riding talking about youth crime and youth security. Interestingly enough, there were two young men there. One, Kevin, who's a youth worker working on the east side of Woodbine Avenue, did a lot of work with kids who weren't doing well. One of the young men he brought with him had grown up in very difficult times in Regent Park and talked about the forces that were at work on him and drew him briefly, but others perman-

ently, into a style of living that took them out of school, that took them into destructive behaviour.

One of the things that drug dealers will do in places like Regent Park or in other neighbourhoods in this city, in this province, where people are disadvantaged, is ask kids to go to the store and buy them something and keep the change. This young man was quite insightful. He said what happens is that these dealers are looking to take advantage of these kids, to build a debt of gratitude towards them, the dealers, so that over time they can introduce more and more tasks and draw those kids in.

This young man was saying to me, when he was first asked by a dealer to go to a store and buy something and keep the change, he was astounded at the fact that he had money to actually buy something on the shelves. This was a young man who didn't get an allowance, who came from a household with no money, and so he was extremely vulnerable to the temptation offered by that drug dealer. The drug dealers do more than that. They see that, as this young man said, your shoes are shot, that they're gone, and he's very happy to buy you a pair of shoes—the best—so that the bond of friendship and that debt of gratitude grow, and so one day it's not going to buy groceries in the store; it's a question of holding a bag of something—not specified, just holding a bag of something—while the drug dealer moves on.

We are not investing adequately in our youth. They are open to and susceptible to these programs of recruitment, and when we don't deal with poverty in our society, then we get the sorts of destructive behaviour that, not unreasonably, parents want dealt with by having a kid removed from class. I think that's not unreasonable on the part of parents: to want a safe space for their kids. What you need to go beyond that, though, is to ensure that the programs are in place and that the social causes that bring about the problem in the first place outside of school are addressed early on.

I know from talking to friends of mine in the Bangladeshi community that the extraordinary difficulty that new Canadians have in finding a decent-paying job, the extraordinary difficulty they have in getting their credentials recognized, has a crushing pressure on those families. It starts to force things apart in those households, so that you have parents expressing great concern about where their youth are headed, what sort of activities they get involved with because their families are in crisis.

I remember talking to a Vietnamese woman in my riding who was working two jobs. She would be out of the house pretty much from early morning to late evening. Her Vietnamese children grew up in English, her English was poor, so she rarely saw her kids and she was not in a position frankly to even speak with them well. Her kids were angry. That was a common problem. It has been a common problem of angry children in these situations where families are being crushed down under the pressure of poverty, where the kids don't get the support at home that they have to have.

I say to the Minister of Education that in fighting for those kids who are often suspended or expelled, but also

fighting for the kids who are in school who deserve a safe environment, any government in power has to push for more than simply regulation in school and moving kids out. It has to deal with the underlying dynamics that shape those children and their behaviour.

The very troubling and disturbing case of Drew Stewart was raised in this chamber. Drew lived in East York. I actually had an opportunity to meet him in 2004 when I was campaigning. Something I did in 2004 was stand on a street corner with a sign and wave at the cars, and Drew—being Drew Stewart—thought it was interesting to see a guy standing around on a street corner. He came up to me, shook my hand and chatted with me briefly. He was a very open, engaging, healthy-looking young man. A few months later, in a fight in one of the local restaurants near his collegiate, he was stabbed to death.

When you talk to the teachers who work in those colleges, you know that there are these bubbling dynamics, these undercurrents that cause anger, that cause frustration, that cause destructive behaviour. When we're in a situation where we don't deal with those things, this bill will not solve the problems. It is not enough of a solution. It is not a broad enough approach to deal with what has to be dealt with.

It isn't so much that we shouldn't end the right of principals to expel students without a hearing. I think that change is entirely defensible. I think principals should have the power to suspend. The list of reasons for suspension—threatening someone's life, bringing in weapons, drug dealing, etc.—all those things are reasonable measures. The problem we have is the larger unreasonable and problematic dynamic of how we treat our young people as a whole and how we don't address those questions of hunger, homelessness and lack of economic opportunity.

One of the difficulties I have when I look at this bill and realize that programs have to be put in place is that the \$23 million that's mentioned as the funding that will deal with these problems—it's not clear that this will be new money. It's not certain that it won't simply be yanked from some other program. We already have a problem with funds that are supposed to go to English as a second language being diverted to pay for heating buildings, to pay for simple operations.

I was a city councillor from 1990 to 1997. I was out of office for a number of years and came back last year. One of the things that startled me, that shocked me, was the physical condition of the schools, the physical deterioration of windows, roofs, eavestroughing, of the simple envelope, the simple structure of the buildings that had been set aside and neglected for so long. So when I look at this \$23 million that has been promised, I have to ask: Is this money that will simply be taken from other programs or is this in fact a real investment of new money into these schools?

Paul Christie, who was appointed to supervise, to run the Toronto board of education a number of years ago when they were saying, "We can't balance our books"—

one of the things he did to balance the books was get rid of the youth workers. That was part of the problem that we're facing in Toronto. In order to balance the books, fundamental supports for children to ensure their behaviour was safe rather than dangerous were taken away.

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I don't have the confidence that the funds will be there, just as we know that even now school boards are facing great difficulty, just as we know that capital money was diverted over into operating money this year so that the Toronto District School Board wouldn't be running a deficit.

We seem to be playing this shell game of money moving around and around, just like we see with the Ministry of the Environment, where today's crisis—a legitimate crisis—means that yesterday's crisis is set aside, staff are pillaged, they're reallocated and the problems continue to grow, as the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has said. We see the same pattern in education as we see in environment: a moving around of money, a declaration that the problems were going to be dealt with, but a fundamental reluctance, a fundamental lack of commitment, to actually getting at the problems in any systemic way.

The key point that this Legislature has to consider in the government's behaviour—and I've covered a number of areas—is that this problem of zero tolerance and expulsion should have been dealt with years ago. We knew what the problems were earlier in this decade. We knew what the problems were in 2003 when this government was elected, and yet it has waited until quite literally, in legislative terms, the end of the clock for action. After that, there's a wait until 2008 before schools are required to have in place the alternative programs for those students who are expelled.

This government seems to have adopted the strategy that Mackenzie King made quite famous, which was: Do nothing until you're absolutely forced to do something, and then do a very little bit.

We're back to where we were before the Safe Schools Act came into effect. That's better than having the Safe Schools Act in effect the way it was originally written, but that is something that could have been resolved years ago. And in that time, over these years, there continued to have been unreasonable expulsions; there continued to have been a conveyor belt of minority youth and disabled youth pushed out of the schools, onto the streets. So that when we see crime problems, we shouldn't be surprised. When we see problems simply left almost for the full term of the government before it's willing to address them, we shouldn't be applauding them. We should be saying, "What took you so long? Why didn't you act very shortly after being elected?" This was a problem you already understood, that the Human Rights Commissioner had already identified, a problem that you said had to be addressed quickly—a problem that required urgent action.

Almost at the end of your legislative term is not urgent action. Almost at the end of your term is essentially

putting something aside for a long time till you realize an election's coming and you have to do something so that when you get out on the streets you can say, "We did something." Others will address this, but this government shouldn't be proud of doing the simple work it said it would do years ago.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I want to congratulate the Minister of Education for bringing Bill 212 forward.

I had the chance to work in the second-largest school board in the province for about nine years, and I have seen with my own eyes what happened with regard to students before the Safe Schools Act came into existence and after the Safe Schools Act.

Before the Safe Schools Act came into existence, trustees paid great attention before they expelled any students. They agonized over those cases for hours because they wanted to keep those students actually in the classroom. After the Safe Schools Act came into existence, trustees didn't have a choice. What happened was that automatically the students got expelled.

Before the Safe Schools Act came into existence, there were a handful of expulsions in the school board, which had about 120,000 students in the classrooms. After the Safe Schools Act came into existence, the expulsions just skyrocketed.

The students get into trouble for various reasons. This bill is not going to solve every problem, but this bill is actually in the right direction. They get into bad company or they maybe come from poor parents or they somehow get involved in cases where they shouldn't have gotten involved.

I have experienced, with my own eyes, some of these students who came from private schools where they got into trouble. They came into the public school system, they did well, but after a while they got into trouble again because of the company they were associated with.

So what is really important for us is to keep these students in the classroom—work with them so that they can progress to the extent they need to progress—rather than actually kicking them out. This bill exactly does that.

We need to do the progressive punishment, not just kick the kids or the students out as soon as they get into trouble. We need to work with them. We need to make sure that they get integrated into society and into the schoolroom.

Those are my comments.

Mr. Wilson: I do appreciate the comments that our colleague from the NDP caucus from Toronto—Danforth made with respect to the bill, particularly as he talked about the deterioration of schools. As I drive by schools in my riding—and I remember when I was first elected after having a few years of David Peterson and the Liberals, where we used to count the potholes and the number of portables. You can do that now that the Liberals have been back in for three and a half years. The numbers of portables are going up. Your capping of class sizes has forced more students out into what used to be

the playground, which is now the parking lot with portables sitting on it.

There are more split classes. You didn't think through that policy. It was really sexy to go to the voters three and a half years ago during the last election and say that you're going to cap the lower classes—it was going to be a hard cap back then; it's not necessarily a hard cap now. I do see schools deteriorating and we see it. Unfortunately, you had a moratorium on dealing with the closure of schools, and now that that's coming to an end, you've bumped any decisions that will come forward from school boards until after the next election, and there'll be a day of reckoning then. There will be schools that have to be closed, there will be schools that have to be opened, but there's a great deal of uncertainty now.

With respect to expelled students, I still don't quite get it. I'm sure the government is going to try and drill it through my head, but I won't necessarily say the Safe Schools Act is great, because I agree with the previous Liberal speaker that we saw the number of expulsions go up. We should be putting the resources into our school boards to make sure that expelled students do have the counselling and whatever they need to get back on track and into the school.

I agree, you just can't throw them out into the street without any resources, but as I understand the minister's announcement, there was \$31 million committed to education at the time of her announcement—I guess, new money—but they tell us in our research that not one cent of that will actually go to programs that will help expelled students. So I guess you're going to have to explain to me exactly how that's going to—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I was pleased, as I'm sure many listeners and watchers of the legislative channel were, to watch and listen to Peter Tabuns—I'm sorry; the member for Toronto—Danforth, of course—as he spoke to this legislation, Bill 212. This member has brought to this Legislature a wealth of knowledge and a broad-ranging background. His work on city council in and of itself, makes him an incredibly valuable member of this chamber. But his insight into legislation and his ability to read it and analyze it, and he does, consistently.

I just left my office, and I was reading some of the e-mails that are coming in. I got an e-mail from a high school teacher, I say to the Minister of Education, who says "Here we are, we've got a government—not inappropriately—addressing once again the issue of young people's behaviour in our schools." He says, "And do you really expect this school"—referring to his own—"to display the promotional material" that he anticipates will accompany the Minister of Education's Flick Off campaign?

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Hon. Ms. Wynne: It's not mine.

Mr. Kormos: The Minister of Education wants to disavow any association with it, and of course she's right; it's the Minister of the Environment's. The Minister of Education says, "That's not my program," and

she's right. She was so quick to remove herself, to detach herself.

I've got a photo of the Minister of the Environment standing in front of a backdrop that reads "F-U-C-K." Here it is, Speaker, in living colour. The Minister of the Environment is standing in front of a backdrop that—

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I'm happy to respond to the member for Toronto—Danforth. I just want to say that the member for Toronto—Danforth makes a good global argument in terms of the underlying causes of children's pain or deprivation. I think we have to be a little bit careful, though, that we make don't a classist or a racist argument around discipline in schools. We have to be careful about that because discipline issues cut across socio-economic divides and they cut across race divides. We just have to be a little bit careful.

I know the member from Toronto—Danforth would not intend to make an argument that would be discriminatory, but I do think we have to be careful. I completely understand, which is why in our budget we introduced measures that address some of the issues of child poverty in particular that he is talking about. It would be wonderful in this House if we could get some questions from the opposition in the next little while about our budget, about some of those measures, because those are things that I really think need to be aired and we need to be able to talk about, but the members of the opposition have not chosen to do that, or the members of the third party.

I am very sure that the member for Toronto—Danforth will support this legislation. The argument about the timing of the legislation I think is one that we can set aside. The fact is, we did the consultation that needed to be done and we are introducing the legislation. The timing of the introduction of the programs is such that we want boards to have time to set up the programs.

One of the things the previous government did was put programs in place without regard to what needed to be in place in schools. They didn't take into regard how much time it would take for the materials to be ready, for the staff to be in place. We need those things all to be in place, and that's why February 1 is when the programs will be required to be in place.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Tabuns: Thanks to all those who commented: the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, the member for Simcoe—Grey, the member for Niagara Centre and the Minister of Education.

The Minister of Education is correct in saying that it is not simply or solely poverty that drives destructive behaviour. There's no question that there are households that are well off which, for a variety of reasons, will have an atmosphere that's emotionally destructive and that aids or actually drives destructive behaviour on the part of children. She's quite right. There are mental health issues that cut across all classes and all races. Frankly, those issues have to be addressed, as well as the ones that I cited in my earlier speech.

The minister asked why we don't talk about her budget. Frankly, there's not a lot to talk about. Did it actually deal with poverty? Nope. Did it actually make a difference environmentally? Nope. Did it deal with the difficulties we have with education or natural resources? Nope. So the questions that we ask, we'll ask as we see fit. I find it interesting that the government continues to try and change the channel by asking that we ask about their budget. Why?

In any event, getting back to this bill, the minister knew, should have known, a year ago or two years ago,

that any action taken to deal with this problem would require resources going into those schools. Frankly, I don't see why it took so long and why we're going to continue to have to wait until 2008, why this wasn't acted on much sooner.

The Acting Speaker: It being approximately 6 p.m. of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, April 30, 2007, till 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 30 April 2007

Lundi 30 avril 2007

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Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COURT STAFF

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On April 26, I raised the issue of the more than 1,400 staff employed by the Attorney General in courtrooms across the province who have been working under impossible conditions since the implementation of the terms of the flexible part-time agreement. The Attorney General and the Premier have been ignoring the pleas of these employees for months, and their union was not able to advance a solution.

Responses saying that employees agreed to the terms are an abdication of responsibility and don't do anything to resolve what for many staff are financial hardship and personal stress, not because of lack of employment but because the Attorney General isn't paying these people for the work they are doing and for which payment is being withheld. At the Newmarket court, that translates into an average of \$4,000 per employee since January 1. Province-wide, the government is withholding more than \$1 million from these employees.

This morning I was joined at the Newmarket courthouse by many of these victims of this unfair agreement. The unintended consequences of that agreement are causing serious harm to hard-working employees. I made public this embarrassing situation, released the letter I delivered to the Attorney General and the Premier last week in which I called on them to act immediately to resolve this matter, and committed to once again raise this issue in the House today. So, on behalf of the 1,400 staff province-wide, I call on the Attorney General once again to resolve this issue without delay.

MINOR HOCKEY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's with great pride that I rise in the House today to share some exciting news from my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. We've captured seven Ontario championship titles. What an amazing feat.

The Cobourg novice A team, the Campbellford novice CC team and the Port Hope midget AE team are each proudly displaying their 2006-07 OMHA championship trophies. Also, the city of Quinte West is understandably proud of their minor bantam team, as well as their bantam team, which now hold 2006-07 OMHA champion-

ship titles. As well, the village of Baltimore will have two OMHA championship banners on display. They will commemorate the 2006-07 victorious season for their novice and atom championship teams.

I join the citizens of my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West in commending your teams' accomplishments and salute your talents, dedication and hard work. The coaches, sponsors and parents are to be applauded for supporting these young athletes and contributing to their very successful teams. These teams represent the best in our Canadian hockey tradition, and I share the pride in their outstanding accomplishments.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): The Ontario Liberals do not realize the seriousness of the problem of issuing grants to groups without a formal application or even selection criteria. The issue is handing out taxpayers' money without any process: no application, no public notice, no minutes of record, no selection criteria used, and no follow-up process to ensure value for money.

Today we are going to be debating an opposition day motion in this House that asks Minister Colle to table all paperwork on this issue. We strongly encourage the Liberals to support this motion. The Ottawa Citizen, in their April 27 edition, stated, "The Liberals have trouble with transparency. Their majority on a legislative committee has blocked an opposition request for the provincial Auditor General to review the controversial file and to report back before the next election."

It is time for the Premier and the minister to be accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario and to have these records duly audited. It is the right thing to do.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): What a difference a community meeting makes. Community pressure is working to stop a proposal that would see a high-voltage transmission corridor, a spin-off of the McGuinty Liberals' unsustainable energy plan, go through the city's east end. Government documents have shown that the city's east end, including Pape Avenue, could be a site for a high-voltage transmission corridor, also called the third Toronto line.

I have provided these documents and the newspaper reports on them to the Clerk for access by the members.

The proposed routes have been in the news since early April. The OPA has said it will have an assessment of the third Toronto line this summer. The minister's comments in the Legislature and comments by his staff that Pape Avenue is no longer an option have come after community mobilization happened. The Minister of Energy's spokesperson has told the *Globe and Mail*, which was among the first news outlets to report on this issue, that the eastern transmission lines "are no longer an option on Pape Avenue." The spokesperson "remained non-committal on other east-end locations."

I say to the minister now: Put it in writing. Table in this Legislature the formal legal documents that rule out the proposed route on Pape Avenue and any other proposed route through Toronto–Danforth.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): I rise in the House today to inform Ontarians that May is South Asian Heritage Month. South Asian Heritage Month is held throughout the month of May. It is the first of its kind in Canada and celebrates the first arrivals from the Indian subcontinent, beginning in May 1838.

It was also with great pleasure that I was able to take part in yesterday's Khalsa Day festivities with Premier McGuinty and seven of my colleagues and, of course, many constituents from my riding of Brampton West–Mississauga. Premier McGuinty has been attending this event for more than seven years.

1340

Thanks to the McGuinty government's efforts, the South Asian community and countless other ethnic communities are thriving and vibrant and have contributed enormously to the foundation of this province, despite the negative attacks from the Tory Conservatives, who would rather not see a government assist our cultural groups to help them integrate into Ontario.

Yesterday's parade marked the 308th anniversary of Vaisakhi, celebrated by thousands of Sikh Canadians, a strong indication that Ontario is and will continue to be a province where cultural groups feel at home—again, thanks to the efforts of the McGuinty government.

I'm proud to be part of a government which actively engages and encourages Ontario's many different ethnic groups. I applaud the McGuinty government for being the first Ontario government that has made efforts to contribute to Ontario's multiculturalism. I invite all Ontarians to join us in celebrating South Asian Heritage Month.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I rise today on behalf of our leader, John Tory, and the Progressive Conservative caucus in response to some very serious remarks made by Premier McGuinty to the media on

Friday when asked to comment on our recent line of questioning with respect to the slush fund scandal.

As a member of this Legislature and as an Ontarian, I was disgusted to hear the Premier of this province sink to such a low, attempting to deflect the culpability of his own government in this mess by insinuating that questioning by members on this side of the House has been motivated by racism. This is unprincipled behaviour, unacceptable behaviour, and demonstrates a shocking lack of leadership on behalf of Mr. McGuinty.

His minister's rushed announcement of an application process for the funds his government carelessly shovelled out the door this past year with no paper trail is all but an acknowledgement of guilt. Yet, the Premier still thinks it is acceptable to diminish the importance of this issue by characterizing our legitimate questions regarding millions of taxpayer dollars as a mere outburst and subsequently chalks up our approach to hold this government accountable to racism.

Dalton McGuinty used gutter politics to attack the opposition. He has tarnished the reputation of all members of the Legislature and completely damaged the political process. The Premier didn't have the character to apologize last week, but he should apologize now, and I challenge him to appear in the Legislature this afternoon to do so. His actions were completely beneath the office he holds. All members of the Legislature and all Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

SAULT STE. MARIE ECONOMY

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased to share some more good news about our community's economy and good news for the people of Ontario.

This past week, on behalf of Minister Steve Peters, I had the pleasure to announce that the provincial claims centre, a part of the Ministry of Labour, will be hiring an additional 15 new workers with an additional \$1-million investment. This funding will provide a boost to my community's economy by adding new jobs, and this investment is part of a provincial strategy to bring more jobs to Sault Ste. Marie and northern Ontario. To date, over 300 additional public sector positions have come to Sault Ste. Marie under the McGuinty government, including approximately 200 health care positions that have been added to our community over the past three and a half years. They have been joined by new education professionals, police officers, daycare workers and countless others.

While the NDP ripped up the contracts of Ontario's public servants and the Conservatives closed schools and hospitals and fired thousands of nurses in the process, our government understands the importance of civil servants, who support local economic growth and provide valuable public services to all residents of Sault Ste. Marie.

The 15 new hires will be helping to protect employees' rights as we work to accelerate employment standards claims in our community and throughout Ontario.

This funding is part of a \$3.6-million provincial strategy to improve efficiency in the claims process and reduce wait times. The Ministry of Labour receives more than 20,000 claims annually, so it's a huge task.

We are committed to protecting workers' rights, and I'm happy to report that our government is making tremendous progress when it comes to protecting workers' rights.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I rise today to comment on how far the McGuinty Liberals have come in repairing our public health care system and bringing down wait times for Ontarians. I know it's an important item, and when it comes to wait times, we are not just talking about change; we've gotten real results. Hamilton Health Sciences Corp. has already been able to bring down angioplasty wait times by 84%, cancer treatment wait times by over 27%, and hip replacement wait times down by over 51%. Our government has just announced an additional \$9.8-million investment for the Hamilton Health Sciences Centre, which will go to bringing down wait times for cardiac procedures.

When the leader of the official opposition attacks our wait time initiatives, it's also an attack on front-line workers, the unsung heroes of our health care system. The member opposite's policies also include taking \$2.5 billion—do you believe it?—out of the health care system and then working to privatize it, while we have been working hard to bring in 8,000 more nurses, increase the number of doctors, and make real reductions to wait times. There's so much more to do, and we continue to look forward to the challenges of the future.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise in the House again on a positive note, like the previous speaker, to talk about just how far the province of Ontario has come in the area of public education. This week is Education Week. We are celebrating teaching excellence—we support the teachers in this province—and student achievement in the province.

The McGuinty government, unlike previous governments, has made education a real priority. Classes are smaller, test scores are higher, and graduation rates are up. The province of Ontario has come a long way since the days of the Conservatives, when 26 million learning days were lost due to full-time teachers' strikes, and when public education funding decreased and private education funding increased. The members opposite would like to take us back to those days, but we won't let them.

There's finally peace in our schools and stability in the classrooms. I ask all Ontarians, in celebration of Education Week, to look at just how far we have come together. Let's celebrate contracts with teachers and honour

them. Let's celebrate student success in literacy and numeracy. Let's celebrate students graduating. And let's celebrate moving Ontario's public education system forward together.

The McGuinty government's commitment to teachers, support staff and students ensures that our education system will not return to the bad days of damage, cuts and neglect. There's always more to do, but through the support of our government and the people of Ontario, we'll ensure that that progress continues.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 67, An Act to amend various Acts to require a declaration with respect to the donation of organs and tissue on death / *Projet de loi 67, Loi modifiant diverses lois pour exiger que soit faite une déclaration au sujet du don d'organes et de tissu au moment du décès.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 6 and 7 be waived.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House

shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 30, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 335. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bentley, Christopher
Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona

Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Hoy, Pat
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mitchell, Carol

Orazietti, David
Parsons, Ernie
Petefs, Steve
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smitherman, George
Takhar, Harinder S.
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter

MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Scott, Laurie
Tabuns, Peter
Tory, John
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 39; the nays are 22.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION WEEK

SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge Education Week in Ontario and to congratulate Ontario's education community.

L'engagement et le dévouement des enseignantes et enseignants, des parents, des conseils scolaires, des employeurs et de tant d'autres au cours des trois dernières années nous ont aide à appuyer chaque élève.

I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight just some of the contributions made by our education partners to help students succeed.

First of all, there are countless Ontario teachers, principals and education support staff who go above and beyond the call of duty every day. We recently recognized 15 of them with Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. Each of these educators has been a tremendous influence for good in the lives of our kids, day in and day out.

Award recipient Celina Cada-Matasawagon is one shining example. She works with aboriginal students to build their self-esteem and pride in their heritage. She also helped to find classrooms for students evacuated from Kashechewan and brought culturally relevant materials like dog sledding into her lessons.

There are also 1,600 student success teachers in our high schools right now determined to help struggling students get back on track—and we will add 300 more next year—and thousands of new primary teachers who have taken advantage of small class sizes to spend more one-on-one time with their students.

Teachers and principals have also been leaders within the ministry. For example, we hired 70 experienced educators to join our literacy and numeracy secretariat. They've been leading the charge towards helping all students achieve a solid foundation in reading, writing and math.

1400

Ontario's employers have been opening their doors in record numbers to students who want hands-on learning. There has been a significant increase in the number of students taking co-operative education courses because there are more employers providing a wider selection of placements. There are also 1,500 more employers and apprenticeship providers involved in our Ontario youth apprenticeship program this year compared to last year.

I also had the opportunity to work with many outstanding parents on the Parent Voice in Education project during my days as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. We are currently reviewing 278 applications from aspiring individuals who want to join our new provincial parent board.

I've also heard from hundreds of students during my school visits across Ontario. They have been loud and clear on what they need to succeed, and that input has gone a long way in influencing our approach to education. We have received valuable help from partners working at school boards, community organizations and colleges.

Not only have these partnerships been inspiring and heart-warming; they have also produced results. The graduation rate is up for the second year in a row. It now stands at 73%, and Ontario schools remain on track to achieve our target of an 85% graduation rate by 2010-11. More elementary students are achieving the provincial standard in reading, writing and math, and in three years we are up 10 percentage points, to 64%. We have no doubt that it will continue to climb to 75%.

We have accomplished all of this during three years of peace and stability in all of our schools. This is no small feat. It's taken the shared focus and determination of everyone to put students first.

During Education Week, I encourage all Ontarians to thank someone in the education community for the energy and enthusiasm they bring to our schools.

Ensemble, nous créons un meilleur système éducatif financé par les deniers publics.

It will be a school system that reaches every student, something of which we can all be proud.

CHILD PROTECTION

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise today to tell the House about the McGuinty government's next steps in protecting Ontario children from the dangers of Internet crime.

Earlier today, my colleague the Minister of Education and I launched Air Dogs, the second part of the CyberCops program, at the Divine Infant Catholic school in Scarborough. As many of you may recall, the McGuinty government announced the first phase of this amazing software program, called Mirror Image, in January 2005. Mirror Image is designed to teach grade 7 students about the dangers of online predators and Internet luring.

Today, we introduced the Air Dogs program. Air Dogs is intended for grade 8 students and deals with the issues of cyber-theft, extortion and bullying. This software means that tens of thousands of kids will now learn to use the Internet more safely. This program is yet another example of the McGuinty government's continuing efforts to make sure that Ontario's children are protected against child pornographers and predators on the Internet.

The Internet is an integral part of the daily lives of schoolchildren in Ontario. In fact, Canada has one of the highest Internet usage rates in the world. More and more, our children are using the Internet to learn about their world, but at the same time, many are unwittingly putting themselves at risk. With so many children using the Internet, educating them and making them aware of the dangers of the Internet is a challenge. In Ontario, we are up to that challenge.

This initiative shows that the McGuinty government is fulfilling its commitment to keep our children safe. Almost half of youth in secondary schools, especially girls, say someone has made unwanted sexual comments to them online. Protecting children from Internet crimes is one of the six key areas identified in our government's fight against crime. I'm very proud of the fact that Ontario is not only a Canadian but also a global leader in the efforts to cyber-proof schoolchildren.

The McGuinty government invested \$1 million from the victims' justice fund for the creation of CyberCops and the development of training programs for teachers. LiveWires Design developed the program and its two main components in collaboration with the Ontario Prov-

incial Police's crime prevention and electronic crime section. Their collaboration has given us a valuable tool, and I thank them for their hard work.

Air Dogs will be provided to all schools in the province in the fall. The strength of this program comes from its interactive nature and the easy way children can use it. CyberCops is based on facts from actual criminal cases.

The Ontario Physical and Health Education Association developed the training for teachers and manages the program for the Ministry of Education. Elio Antunes, the association's executive director, attended today's event. He has played a key role in the training program. I would like to thank this association and all the teachers who use CyberCops for a job well done.

Combatting Internet crimes against children, as I said earlier, is one of the six key areas identified in our government's fight against crime. We are also working to build stronger, safer communities by investing more than \$37 million annually to help municipalities hire 1,000 new police officers. Half of those new police officers are assigned community policing duties such as school visits and working with youth groups. The other 500 are assigned to six priority areas, including the fight against Internet luring and child pornography.

In addition, we are working with our justice sector partners—the Attorney General, the OPP and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police—to implement a comprehensive strategy to fight Internet luring and child pornography. Since June 2004, we've also invested \$1 million a year in additional funding to the OPP's child pornography section, known as Project P, to increase its capacity to fight child pornography. The additional funding allowed the OPP's child pornography section to increase its number of detectives and acquire technology and specialized training.

We're acting because we want the Internet to truly be a great learning tool, a tool free of those who prey on children. This innovative CyberCops program will help us do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of John Tory and the Ontario PC caucus, I'm pleased to recognize Education Week in Ontario. Education Week is a special opportunity to celebrate the three pillars of our education system: teaching excellence, student achievement, and exceptional administrative and community support. The theme of this year's Education Week is "Reach Every Student," and it recognizes the important work that all of our important educational partners do 52 weeks of every year to help ensure that our students are reaching their full potential in their ongoing academic, physical, social and spiritual development.

Education excellence is about the interrelationship between students and those valued education partners. It is about the important leadership role that our principals

and vice-principals play and, of course, the important leadership role of our teachers. It is about the daily interface between students and their teachers—we are all in their debt for going the extra mile to make the various academic and other subjects come alive through their dedication to the calling of teaching and to the excellence with which they carry out that calling in our schools every day.

It is also about the important ongoing role of parents and their involvement in the day-to-day lives of their children's education and through their support of the school community and the encouragement of teachers and principals.

Finally, it is about the way in which the wider community provides the encouraging support and communication of life experiences to the students as they develop into responsible citizens who will one day participate fully in all facets of the social, cultural, economic and political life of our society.

We join in acknowledging and celebrating the excellent work that our educational partners do to truly reach every student by way of encouragement, support, assistance and advice as our students face the many significant challenges, as they strive to harness life's opportunities together with their own vision of hope for their tomorrow.

1410

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased, on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, to respond to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services' comments on the Air Dogs program.

To begin with, I would like to thank former Solicitor General Bob Runciman for his December resolution recognizing February 7 as Safer Internet Day in Ontario as part of an ongoing effort to combat Internet crime against children. I notice that in the press release the minister used, he had Mr. Paul Gillespie, vice-chair of Kids' Internet Safety Alliance, offer comments, and I would like to thank him as well. He did excellent work in the child pornography unit with the Metro police service until the Liberal government cut off his funding.

We all know that Internet luring of our children is a serious and ongoing problem and a growing problem. However, regarding today's announcement, we need more resources, not photo ops, to fix the problem. The reality is that when you talk about the amount of money that has been put into the education system as a result of Internet luring, it works out to be only about \$1 million in total. With 4,900 schools in the province of Ontario—and that is not including the ones you are preparing to close in rural Ontario—that works out to \$203 per year; \$203 per school for Internet luring. I think that is disgraceful.

If you go to practically any school in the province of Ontario right now, you will see one of the big Liberal propaganda boards. If someone changes a doorknob or

they change a mirror in a washroom or they put in a flower bed, the government rushes out and puts these \$1,000 signs up—\$1,000 each. They put the signs all over Ontario. That money spent on propaganda should go into the classroom; it should go into areas like Internet luring and child pornography to teach the kids properly, not taking a million dollars out of the victims' justice fund and then taking credit for it as part of a fancy education photo op in Education Week.

A lot more has to be done. We have to get behind people like Paul Gillespie, who have done an excellent job, but what they need are more resources, not fancy photo ops, not fancy announcements in the House, but actually resources: more police officers, more help for the teachers and more help for the students themselves. Again I want to say that the fact that they put in \$1,000 signs for changing a doorknob in a washroom is not enough. They need to spend real money, and they need to spend it now.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): New Democrats salute all the teachers, support workers, administrators and trustees who work tirelessly on behalf of the students and the parents of this province. During Education Week, we want to celebrate and acknowledge many of the teachers, in fact all of the teachers, in our education system, whose job has changed over many years to include many functions. In fact, teachers these days have to be policemen and women, they have to be social workers, they have to be psychologists, they have to be mothers and fathers; they play multiple roles. It isn't just teaching that they have to do on a regular basis, but so much more. So we celebrate all of the work they do.

We celebrate as well support workers, who are doing more with fewer staff and who are working harder than ever before with less money than ever before. We celebrate education assistants, lunchroom supervisors, technicians, maintenance workers, custodial staff, people who work hard and yet are barely making a living in some of these professions. It's unfortunate that the commitment of these professionals is not matched by the Ministry of Education.

The question around Education Week is, are we reaching every student? I'm not sure. We are faced with funding shortfalls and boards that have used up reserve funds and are reporting deficits all over the place. Parents are raising millions of dollars to prop up an underfunded system and are feeling pressure every day to raise more. Oh, yes, this government is nicer than the previous regime; that is certain. But when you look at the problems that we continue to face, we have as many problems under a Liberal regime as we did under the previous regime.

Only a fraction of the \$4 billion promised three years ago to deal with crumbling schools has been spent, while students continue to sit in unhealthy, sometimes danger-

ous, buildings. Schools are threatened with closure, and communities are being disrupted. And this under a government that had a moratorium on school closures.

We have fewer art teachers than ever before, fewer music teachers than ever before. We only have 35% of our schools with physical education teachers, yet we are demanding of teachers to dance up and down with students for 20 minutes every day. But only 35% of our schools have a physical education teacher.

We have more immigrant students coming into our system, yet we have fewer ESL teachers than ever before—yes, this under a Liberal regime. We are now forcing more and more students who have special needs to be in the regular classroom than ever before. So these poor teachers now are teaching ESL students and they're teaching more and more special-needs students than ever before. No wonder our teachers are tired at the end of the day, when we are putting on them more of a burden to teach students who normally and in the past used to have specialized teachers do some of this work.

We have now larger class sizes than ever before from grades 4 to 8. The government monitors how many students we have in the primary grades, but they deliberately do not monitor how many students we have from grades 4 to 8. They don't want to monitor that. Do you know why? Because we have more students than ever before. We now have more split classes than ever before, combined classes, in some cases two and three classes in one.

Can you think of the job of the teacher who has to manage more ESL students, more special-education students, more split classes and larger classes than ever before? Is it any wonder that we are honouring teachers on a regular basis, a yearly basis? The problems are getting larger, bigger than ever before, with less support from the Liberal regime than people expected. The veneer is very thin. Oh, yes, they're saying they are spending billions, but it's all money that is circulated, money taken from one pot to fix a gap, creating another gap where there was none before. That's what the government does on a regular basis.

Do we celebrate teachers? You bet we do. New Democrats praise them on a regular basis for doing a job that is harder than ever before.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): It is now time for oral questions. Before we begin, I would like to remind members that all questions need to be placed through the Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and it concerns the McGuinty political slush fund.

You have participated in slapping taxpayers in the face by blocking the public accounts committee from asking the Auditor General to review the year-end slush fund on an expedited basis. This is the same year-end slush fund that saw hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars paid out by your ministry. In the words of James Wallace, writing in the *Timmins Daily Press*, "There were no strings or accountability measures attached to the grants to ensure the money was well or wisely spent." He goes on to say, "In some cases, grant recipients didn't even ask for money—they appear to have been offered a cheque by the government."

The real Mike Colle, the real Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, not the one following the orders of Premier McGuinty or the Liberal campaign chair, would want to clear his name by calling in the Auditor General. Will you do that?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I won't do it. You asked me if I would do it. You need to ask if the minister would do it.

Minister?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Our government has over the last number of years seen a great need to invest in many of our partner organizations that are providing incredibly good services for our newcomers, like the Halton Multicultural Council, Settlement and Integration Services Organization—SISO—in Hamilton, Information Niagara, the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre.

These are organizations we've partnered with, and what we've done is tried to ensure that they have more resources to provide better expanded services. There's been a real pent-up need because there's been no attention paid to their facilities and their program expansion for years. We are proud to make those investments with those partners.

1420

Mr. Tory: We can see that the other thing Mr. Wallace wrote in his column is true, namely, "Don't ask Mike Colle the time of day, which way is up or why the sky is blue. You won't get an answer." That's absolutely the truth. I would suggest that the minister should answer the question. We saw the trouble that the Premier got into on Friday by failing to directly answer a question.

Mr. Wallace went on to say that thus far the minister has "offered muddled justifications for what at best has been a shockingly arbitrary and haphazard grant program." "Shockingly arbitrary and haphazard": Those are the words of a journalist writing about your program. That is not, I would suggest, how any government spending should be described at any time: "shockingly arbitrary and haphazard." That is why we need the Auditor General called in here.

I ask the minister, why won't you do the right thing and call the Auditor General in to have a look at this mess, clear the air, clear your name and assure taxpayers that they're getting good value for their money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Leader of the Opposition won't for a minute stop and acknowledge the fact that system-

atically we've ensured that newcomer programs in Ontario are funded equally to those in Quebec. We did that. We brought in legislation, Bill 124; where foreign-trained professionals have been ignored and unable to work in their professions for years, we brought in that legislation. We've created immigration gateways in London, in Windsor, in Sudbury so that immigrants can be welcome in those cities. We've also invested in more services, and those services are now being delivered in better facilities because of our systematic approach right across the province to making life better for newcomers. That's the approach we've taken.

Mr. Tory: I'll acknowledge Bill 124, which we all passed. I'll acknowledge the fact that there's an immigration agreement with the federal government. What we want to know is when are you—through you, Mr. Speaker—going to acknowledge that you have handed out the taxpayers' money with no criteria, no process, no interviews, no fairness to groups that might have wanted to know there was money available? That's what we want to know, when you're going to acknowledge that.

The North Bay Nugget is unhappy about the Liberals blocking a probe into this. They said, "Grants must be transparent." The Kitchener-Waterloo Record today said your response was, and I quote, "weak." Your sham motion in public accounts last week, they say, is "hard to take seriously." They go on to say this: "The issue is accountability." They go on to say that "full transparency would be the best policy. The government should call in the Auditor General." That's not us; it's newspapers across the province.

My question: Why won't you come clean? Why won't you let the taxpayers see what has gone on here by calling in the Auditor General now—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are many long-suffering organizations, volunteer based, and also organizations that represent groups of newcomers that have not received any attention for decades. What we've done is we've partnered with them to provide much-needed new facilities and services, whether they be the Midaynta Somali Community Services, whether they be the St. George Arab Cultural Centre. At the St. George Arab Cultural Centre they told me that in 1975 their centre at St. Clair and Avenue Road burned down. They said they phoned city hall, they phoned the province of Ontario and nobody would even answer their phone call. They said now they're proud that they actually have an Arab centre here in Ontario, here in the GTA, that they can be proud of, to share their values and at the same time share services for many newcomers who come from many Arab countries to Ontario. That's what we're doing, and that's good for Ontario.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Culture and it concerns the undocumented, unaccountable fund that she's apparently

operating out of her ministry. On Friday, the Premier said that the minister is operating a year-end slush fund that saw millions, in his words, going "out the door"—and he had the sound effect—"just like that." He went on to say, "No application form. No formal process"—the Premier's words again.

Minister, how much money have you shovelled out the door to cultural groups from your year-end slush fund—no application form, no formal process, just like that? How much money?

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): Every organization that has received dollars from the Ministry of Culture has done so because they have made a case as to the need. They have also given business plans, and they have provided to us a very, very strong case as to why it's needed. It goes through a very strict process of why the need is there, and it is to support a sector that is very much in need and that deserves every penny it has received.

Mr. Tory: That's really terrific, except it was the Premier, your boss, who said the money went out the door "just like that": no application form, no formal process. Those were his words. I'm assuming you want to stand in your place this afternoon and tell us the Premier was dead wrong, that in fact all that you said about business plans and all the rest of it is in your files and, furthermore, that you will stand in your place this afternoon and tell us you will produce those business plans and documents for all of us to see, so that we can see that that's in accord with the facts.

Minister—through you, Mr. Speaker—there are millions of dollars involved here that the Premier said went out the door "just like that." We think the taxpayers expect, no matter who is getting this money—arts groups or anybody else—that you are going to exercise the kind of scrutiny you claim to have done just a couple of minutes ago. Produce the documents and show us that's what you did. The Premier said you didn't.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear members place their questions. The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Minister of Energy haven't been very helpful.

Minister of Culture.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: I don't know what the leader of the official opposition is trying to imply here. First of all, I think it is unacceptable that he should suggest that agencies such as the Royal Ontario Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Gardiner museum and the Ontario Science Centre, agencies of my ministry, should somehow not be entitled to receive dollars that they have made a case for. And, by the way, those reports are public. Those dollars are on the website. I believe that he is stretching and reaching very far to suggest that there is something untoward in their applications or in their requests for the dollars.

Mr. Tory: I'm only reaching back as far as last Friday to quote the Premier. He said these organizations received millions of dollars, "out the door just like that."

He said there was no application form. He said there was no formal process. Beyond that, he went on to say that all there was was intense lobbying by very powerful people.

Now, if it's true, as you say, that all the documents are there, all the cases have been made, all those things are available to the public on the Internet, perhaps you could bring copies of those here and point us to the Internet sites where all the business cases are available, because, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this minister, like all of the other ones, has a responsibility to safeguard the taxpayers' money and make sure that, no matter who is asking for it or who is receiving it, there is documentation, there are business plans, there are application forms, and people have had to justify themselves. So if those documents are there, tell us why the Premier said otherwise on Friday. Maybe he's not speaking in accordance with the facts. Maybe you could tell us that and maybe you could tell us where the documents are. Let's see them.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: Again, I really feel that the leader of the official opposition just doesn't seem to understand that the Royal Ontario Museum, the AGO and many of the other agencies on a regular basis continue to advocate for the needs of their agencies. The leader of the official opposition may not understand why we need to support our cultural sector in this province, but we do need to do that. Every dollar that has gone out from my ministry is accounted for. I would suggest that the leader of the official opposition—I don't know if he has time—go to the website and read the public documents that are there, because they are there. Obviously, the leader of the official opposition chooses not to read them, but chooses to have this display here in the Parliament for no reason.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Economic Development will come to order.

New question. Leader of the third party.

1430

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. On Friday, the Premier said he regretted playing the race card in his attempt to silence opposition questions about the McGuinty government slush fund. The Premier should regret it, because it sullies the Office of the Premier and, frankly, it's beneath the standards of this Legislature. And it's an insult to the hundreds of community organizations and cultural groups who were denied an opportunity to fairly apply for the government assistance that was available, denied because there was no application process, no criteria for the McGuinty slush fund.

Minister, in the Premier's absence, will you apologize to this Legislature and to the people of Ontario, and will you now call in the Auditor General to immediately investigate and report on the McGuinty government slush fund?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I think the Premier commented quite clearly last Friday that what we are interested in is ensuring that the issues of helping newcomers and of investing in volunteerism are looked at in a very objective way. For many years, many of these issues have been ignored, and we are trying to do our best to make sure these reinvestments occur.

I know the member still has an opportunity to apologize for calling all the settlement agencies across this province fly-by-night. He should stand on his feet and apologize.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, you have said that there was no formal application process for slush fund money. But this weekend, a Toronto Star column reported there was a process: "The Liberal caucus was told there were year-end funds available, and members were asked to recommend ... groups."

Minister, the first principle of accountability is fair and equal access to government funding, something the McGuinty government has denied to hundreds of cultural groups and community organizations when you denied them an equal opportunity because they didn't know money was available. They didn't know about this inside, back door, Liberal-connected application process.

Tell me something, Minister. Why were only members of the Liberal Party told that government funding was available for cultural groups and community organizations?

Hon. Mr. Colle: All of our settlement partners were involved in getting sectoral improvement funding right across the board. Eighty-two of them got help.

We have invested with organizations of all descriptions across the province, whether they be in the Niagara Peninsula, whether they be in the Ottawa area, whether they be in the Toronto area. They were investments that were made in organizations that were trying to provide better services, to volunteer organizations to enhance their capacity, better language training, better job networks. These were the investments that were made across the province to try to help buttress up those organizations that for too long have been ignored.

Mr. Hampton: The Liberal MPP for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh is candid about how the McGuinty slush fund works. He told his local Cornwall newspaper that as a backbench Liberal MPP he was made aware of a funding opportunity available within the Ministry of Citizenship, that he "heard there were opportunities," and so he put forward the name of a group in his community. He acknowledges, by the way, that there was no formal application process; there was no advisory out there to community organizations about this.

My question is this, Minister: How is it transparent, how is it accountable, how is it fair that only Liberal Party members were told about this "no application, no criteria, let's-do-it-in-the-backroom slush fund"? Tell us, how is that fair? And when will you call in the Auditor General to do an immediate investigation and report on the McGuinty slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are very worthy organizations of long standing across this province, whether it's the Glengarry-Prescott annual games, which have been going on in Ontario for over 100 years. In this case, it's Stuart House, which has been undergoing a renovation. There has been fundraising done by that community for 20 years to try and restore this Loyalist house. The member is a great advocate for his area of Cornwall and a great advocate of historical preservation. These are the kinds of interventions made by members all the time in trying to get help for their community endeavours. This is a very worthy one, recognizing the great contributions that the United Empire Loyalists made to this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I remind members again that the questions need to be placed through the Speaker. That means, in case you're not clear, that the pronoun "you" should never appear. It needs to come through the Speaker. Thank you.

New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Citizenship: This may be a wonderful group; the question is about the slush fund, that "no criteria, no application form, no auditing" slush fund run by the McGuinty government.

Minister, let me tell you why this is important. Members of the Hindu Samaj Temple in Hamilton are with us today. On September 15, 2001, this group's \$1.8-million centre was destroyed by arson. Police say it was a post-September 11, racially motivated hate crime. At the same time that you were telling Liberal members that there was money available through your slush fund, you told the Hindu Samaj Temple that there was no money available; no help. Can you explain the fairness in that, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the member is incorrect. I have never spoken to them or I have never indicated that to them.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, maybe this Hindu Samaj Temple made the mistake in doing things appropriately, because they asked other cabinet ministers, "Is there any help?"

Let me give you the depth of the problem. They have the federal government's support. They have the support of the Hamilton Police Service, who are helping them fundraise. They have the support of the city of Hamilton. But when they went to the McGuinty government on four separate occasions and asked if there was going to be any help from the McGuinty government, they were told, "No help available."

So I ask my question again: How is it acceptable that you run a backroom, let's-not-tell-anybody-but-Liberal-Party-members fund, but a legitimate organization like this comes to you four times and they're told, "Oh, we're not prepared to help you"? How is that fair, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I just wish the member of the third party would correct himself on the next opportunity he gets. The issue here again is that there are an incredible number of very worthy volunteer-based organizations, religious and otherwise, that are doing great things in

Hamilton and all over this province. We appreciate what you do; we know the trauma you went through in 2001. I know that the member from Hamilton Mountain has been working with them and trying to see how they can be helped. This demonstrates again why these investments are important. We are trying to do our best to make the process even better so that we can help groups and organizations that for many years have been ignored. We're trying to do that.

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Mr. Hampton: This temple was the victim of a hate crime. Over the last four years, questions have been asked in this Legislature, statements have been made, letters have been sent to members and ministers of the McGuinty government, and the answer that always came back was, "No help available from the McGuinty government."

The president of the temple is here today. He says, "Throughout 2005 and 2006, McGuinty Liberals told us religious organizations could not apply or qualify for government funds. We see this now to be patently untrue." He goes on, "We are incensed we were not told potential funding existed and were not given a fair chance to apply for it."

Minister, when are you going to call in the Auditor General to do an immediate investigation and report on the unfairness, the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability of the McGuinty government's slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we as a government have tried to ensure that there is an acceptance, a welcoming of all newcomers of all religious faiths, and we've reached out to these organizations to try and ensure that what they do becomes a meaningful part of Ontario and that Ontario respects their volunteerism and their great contribution. So we've tried to do that, and there's much more work to do.

Finally we're addressing these needs that for years have been ignored and paid lip service to. We are trying to do it. We've got more to do. We've put up the registry now, a direct application, so we can do it right across the province, because in past years they have been ignored totally by the other party. We are trying to do something that is needed and we're very, very empathetic. Hopefully, we can continue to work with other ministers to help this temple, but we are trying to do what has not been done for a long time, and that's help our integrated community be part of—

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It concerns the same grant that mysteriously seems to have fallen into the hands of the Lost Villages Historical Society. And again, to repeat what the leader of the New Democratic Party said, when the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh heard there was "a funding opportunity available within the ministry he decided to seek out a much needed grant" for this organization that he once headed. The member says there

was no formal application process, and the Toronto Star says that the way it worked was that the Liberal caucus were told there were year-end funds available and members were asked to recommend worthwhile groups.

So what we want to know is this: Who told the Liberal caucus members that there was money available? No member who isn't a Liberal seems to know there was any money available in case they happen to know a group who needed some, so was the process as follows: Did the Liberal Party campaign chair, who masquerades as the Minister of Finance, call up Liberal MPPs, say there was money available and then say, "Go find me some place to shovel it out the door to get some votes"? Is that how it worked?

Hon. Mr. Colle: All across this province there are identified needs that come through our office, my office, as a result of our regional offices. They also come as a result of long-standing requests by communities that have been asking for help. In this case here it was the area of Cornwall, which is also a high-need area in terms of underemployment and economic devastation. It was an extremely worthy organization that dates back to the Loyalists, and it was well documented. This organization had raised money locally. It was well documented that they were already doing their part, and we were partnering with that volunteer organization to restore a treasure in that part of Ontario, which was the home to the first immigrants, our Loyalists.

Mr. Tory: The more the minister stands in his place and gives these kinds of non-answers, the worse it smells. It reminds us of the words of Justice Gomery, who said, "Good intentions are not an excuse for maladministration of this magnitude." That's what Justice Gomery said. You should go and read his report, because the more we ask, the worse it looks. This group doesn't even appear on the year-end list. The year-end list, we're told by the Premier and minister, is where it's all listed on the website: a list of names and a list of how much money they got shovelled out the door to them from the Liberal campaign chair. This money, in fact, was paid out in February, and the local member says that there was no application process. That's what he says. That means that this whole thing is happening outside of the year-end process. It looks like it's a different slush fund that members of the Liberal Party had access to, and this is a slush fund for all seasons, not just for the year-end.

That is why we need the Auditor General to come in and look at this sordid mess. I remind the minister again, through you, Mr. Speaker, of what Mr. Gomery said: "Good intentions are not an excuse for maladministration of this magnitude." Will the minister call in the Auditor General?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are many needs that have been identified in the fall economic statement of various parts of Ontario that were not getting the attention they deserved. They weren't getting the investments. They had hard, difficult times, whether it was up in Thunder Bay or in Cornwall or in the Niagara Peninsula. There were needs identified that were going to be met in the fall eco-

nomics statement. Some of these investments made by my ministry were to try and ensure that the great needs in many parts of this province, identified by my regional offices etc., where we could invest in agencies that were dealing with volunteerism, newcomers and with heritage preservation, were given resources so they could invest in their facilities. Those are the kinds of investments we made, to try and invest in these service providers, heritage agencies or to serve the economic needs of all of Ontario, especially those that were in tough times.

The Speaker: New question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it's returning to the issue of the Hindu Samaj Temple in Hamilton. The McGuinty government misled this group, whose leaders are here in the gallery today.

The Speaker: You need to withdraw that.

Ms. Horwath: I'll withdraw that.

But the bottom line is that a post-September 11 hate crime of arson destroyed their \$1.8-million temple and multicultural community centre on September 15, 2001. They raised all the funds themselves for the original building and another \$1 million for the rebuilding effort, but they clearly needed the Ontario government's help and approached them many times for a grant.

My question is this: Why didn't anyone in the McGuinty Liberal government—the minister or anyone else—advise the Hindu Samaj group that they had tens of millions of dollars available for cultural and religious groups for capital projects like this one?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said earlier, these investments that we've made are an attempt to ensure that organizations that have been long ignored, that have been reaching out culturally, reaching out for inclusion, reaching out to be full-time partners in Ontario—have been ignored. We have tried to ensure that they get some help from the government where they can get help. We've tried to do that because we recognize that there are many diverse needs. We have again gone further to ensure that now there's an established registry so that all of these can be tracked across Ontario. We hope to continue to partner with these organizations that are doing great work in communities across Ontario and are doing it on a volunteer basis. We are trying to address that need in a more comprehensive fashion with this direct online application which has been up and running since last week now.

Ms. Horwath: Back to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: I wrote to the Premier myself in 2005, seeking funding support for the Hindu Samaj group. Three times in this Legislature I raised the issue and requested funding. In fact I've been to their temple, as have other members of this Legislature, where we were lobbied about the dire need they were in.

The government knew for at least three years that the rebuilding of the Hindu Samaj Temple and the community centre was a funding priority for them and for the city that they and I live in, and that the identified need was urgent. The group was told that the government doesn't provide grants to religious organizations, but the

group sees now that this is not the case because the slush fund went to other such groups.

1450

My question is this: Why did this minister and the government mislead—sorry; I withdraw that—shut out the Hindu Samaj group from applying for funds for this extremely important and symbolic rebuilding project? Do you not think that their organization is worthy, and did you not think that it was a great enough need?

Hon. Mr. Colle: It's unfortunate that the member opposite is attempting to put one group against the other. What we've said emphatically is that there are many organizations all across the province that have had many needs in terms of bringing forth their volunteer programs that have not had any help from government at all. They have helped newcomers with job searches; they've helped newcomers with their food banks. They've been doing this work. They've also helped newcomers in getting jobs. Therefore, we've tried to give them more resources so they can continue to do some of this good volunteer work. We hope to continue to do this. There are so many wonderful groups that are doing this. We are trying to do a better job—and we will do even better, as we've got this direct registry now—because there are many worthy groups.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Government Services and it's about the growing payday loan industry. As many of us know, a payday loan is a small, short-term loan often used to cover urgent expenses until the borrower's next payday. These loans are usually less than the amount of one's paycheck, with terms less than a month.

Statistics Canada recently released a study around payday lending. The study indicates that low-income families are significantly more likely to have used payday loans than families with more financial options. The study also highlighted concerns about questionable practices within the industry, such as high borrowing costs, insufficient disclosure and unfair collection practices.

The federal government last week passed legislation handing provinces the responsibility to further regulate the payday loan industry. Minister, what is our government doing to protect vulnerable Ontarians?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I thank the member for Hamilton West for the question. It is true; it was just late last week that the federal government passed legislation that essentially put the responsibility for payday lending in the hands of the provinces. We had argued that it's better handled federally, but that decision has been made.

Consequently, we're doing what I think the public would expect, and that is to move to provide adequate consumer protection. We have passed a regulation, I can tell the member for Hamilton West, to require payday lenders to display clearly the exact borrowing costs of \$100 or more. That will be very clearly displayed. We

also will require very clear, concise, easily understood language. As well as that, consumers who right now may not get their funds immediately would be required, upon signing their document, to get their funds immediately. I think those are three good steps that we've taken for protection of the consumer.

Ms. Marsales: Thank you, Minister. I'm pleased to hear that we are working hard to protect those vulnerable families. You can see these stores across my riding. From what I understand, there are almost 700 operators in Ontario, who I believe make up half of the country's payday lenders. Now that the federal government has passed Bill C-26, handing over responsibility for regulating the industry to the provinces, is Ontario going to set up a licensing regime? Will we be introducing legislation? How are you moving forward to regulate this industry and ensure that we protect Ontarians from unscrupulous operators?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again the member for Hamilton West has it right. We do have over 700 payday lenders in the province of Ontario, and I think it's growing—over half of them. We did take the three steps I mentioned earlier.

I would also say, we now will look at whether in fact the province should license these, whether in fact the province should set the rates for these, whether in fact we will now apply to the federal government to take over the regulation of these things. I do want to get some public input into it. It's a very large area affecting an awful lot of consumers.

Consequently, we now have on our website a consultation paper that will spell this out. We are asking the public and all interested parties to give us their feedback. We're asking that to be done over the next eight weeks. I would hope that by early in July we will have some input.

I will say that I think the step we've taken for clear disclosure within those outlets is a very good step, but we may very well want to move forward on licensing and setting the rates. I look forward to the public giving some input so that we can move forward, if that's what the public thinks we should do.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and it concerns the slush fund that he's running out of his ministry.

On Saturday, the Toronto Star went into some detail about the \$200,000 that he gave to the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre in Richmond Hill. That's the same organization where seven of the seven board members have close connections to the Liberal Party, including a candidate who has been given a free ride to the nomination in that riding by the campaign chair, Greg Sorbara, and also a close friend, namely the riding president, who is also a close friend of the campaign chair, Greg Sorbara. This is the same organization that

got the funds just three weeks after it registered as an animal welfare charity. The Star quotes a number of their own caucus as saying, "It looks terrible." Well, Speaker, it does look terrible, and I would ask, through you: Will the minister call in the Auditor General to review this slush fund and his practices that, as his own caucus member says, look terrible?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The investments that we've made right across this province, especially investments in groups that are volunteer-based, for the most part, groups that want to service and provide language training, job training—some of them want to provide stress counselling, language interpreter services. Some want to meet the needs of a newcomer immigrant group that haven't been met for years. We have partnered with some of these organizations that have tried to do this. Some organizations have been here for decades and decades. Some are creating new services because the services aren't there. That's what we've tried to do: Make good investments in these needs that have been long-standing and long-ignored.

Mr. Klees: The fact is that those services are being provided in Richmond Hill. This group's address is David Farmani's law office. The \$200,000 cheque was sent to the home of Greg Sorbara's friend, Bohran Fouladi. The Star has been trying to reach him for over a week, with no success. The money, we're told, is just sitting in a bank account. The group itself in a year has raised \$15,000. Saeed Soltanpour is an Iranian community activist and here's what he says: "If there's money, it should be available to everyone."

What this looks like is an attempt by this government to buy the Richmond Hill election. The auditor must be called in, and I trust, Speaker, that you will agree with me that the minister should do everything he can to restore confidence in this government, in his ministry, and that the only way he'll do that is if he calls in the Auditor General.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Many organizations, big and small, are at different stages of development. Some of them have been long-standing organizations that deliver great services and have been doing it for many, many years. Whether it be COSTI in Toronto, SISO in Hamilton or the Catholic Immigration Centre in Ottawa, some of them have been there for a long time. Some are providing new services in sectors where there haven't been any. In the community in question, there haven't been full-time services provided on a comprehensive level. There's a need there. We tried to partner with an organization that was going to try and meet those needs. That's what we did.

We need to make those investments to ensure that people get the language training, the integration and the support services they need to be integrated into Ontario society.

1500

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. For all you've ranted and raved over there for the last week, the people across Ontario are on to you and your funding fiasco. The North Bay Nugget gave you a "brick" for blocking an Auditor General investigation. The Kitchener-Waterloo Record says, "The government's response ... has been weak" and "The government should call in the Auditor General." The Toronto Sun said so many things about you and the Premier that I can't even repeat in this Legislature because they're unparliamentary.

Mr. Minister, the issue is one of accountability. It's not about the groups; it's about you. It's not about how they're spending the money; it's about how you gave it to them. Will you turn the books over to the Auditor General, yes nor no?

The Speaker: I know the member for Beaches–East York knows how to ask a question properly and will do so next time.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member opposite talks about these groups. Many of these groups have got exemplary reputations and have been doing exceptional work year after year without any help. I can mention the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, the Maytree Foundation, the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario, the Multicultural Council of Windsor and New Experiences for Refugee Women. These are organizations that have been doing yeoman work for years that we've partnered with to ensure they continue to meet existing needs and, in some cases, needs that haven't been met. That's the investment we've made. We made that investment with the goal of ensuring these long-standing needs are finally getting some attention. That is what we've tried to do.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, the Brantford Expositor calls this "A Stink over \$30M in Grants." The Chatham Daily News says, "Accountability Measures Missing from Program." The Sault Star I think says it best of all: "Looking for a Straight Answer? Don't Ask Mike Colle." What they all have in common is that your answers have been "spectacularly feeble," and we agree. Minister, what are you afraid of? What are you trying to hide?

My question, through the Speaker, is: Are you going to be accountable, are you going to be responsible, are you going to bring in the Auditor General or are you going to continue to deal with this by bafflebag?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Over and over again, many very worthy organizations have been coming to governments asking for help. They have never been received by anyone who would even listen to them. I've been in the communities. I've been in their soup kitchens, I've been in their community halls, I've been in their basements where they're trying to provide services. So we are providing help to them, whether they be the Flemingdon food bank, the Ireland Park Foundation or the Midaynta Somali community association.

In Toronto, we have a Somali population that is a wonderful contribution to this province. They are provid-

ing great volunteerism, yet they have never received substantive help from any government. We are partnering with the Somali Midaynta association to provide much-needed service to that part of Ontario that has been too long ignored. That is the kind of investment we made and we think it's a very overdue investment in communities like the Somali community, for one.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Recently, Mr. Minister, you joined me in an announcement at the Working Women Community Centre in the great riding of Davenport right here in Toronto. Working Women has a 30-year history of helping newcomer women with pre-employment and employment counselling.

This group was originally created to help women from Portugal, Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean, and it now has expanded to include all women. This innovative centre provides women who are new to Canada with the opportunity to upgrade their English, math and other basic skills, as well as providing supportive services through individual counselling and group life skills sessions. I was pleased that during your visit you were able to announce how the McGuinty government is supporting the good work of this centre. Would you please share with us how these programs of your ministry benefit newcomers to Canada?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would ask the member to make sure that when he's asking a question he addresses it through the Speaker.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): **honourable member:** Through you, Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Davenport for his advocacy on behalf not only of all of the people of his riding but especially those who need additional assistance for opportunity, such as newcomers and, in this case, women in the trades. I was very pleased to have been there with my colleague at the Working Women Community Centre, which, as he says, has done a lot of excellent work for a long period of time. The McGuinty government announced a \$200,000 pre-apprenticeship program, in conjunction with Carpenters' Local 27 and the centre, that gives 16 women the opportunity to get experience in the trade, any academic upgrading that's necessary, any language skills training, but it also gets them a job placement.

This is an excellent program. It's one of almost \$9 million worth of pre-apprenticeship programs that the government has announced this year in various communities across the province. It really does give, in this case, women and newcomers the opportunity to get their foot in the door with the trades, a great future for any worker.

Mr. Ruprecht: I truly appreciate this answer. I understand that our government is well on track in its goal of 26,000 new annual entrants into apprenticeships, a result

that will represent an increase of 7,000 new apprentices each year compared to when this government first took office.

Mr. Minister, there is a global race, as you know, for talent in all sectors of our economy, to attract and retain skilled workers. This is felt nowhere more strongly than in skilled trades right here in Toronto. I am sure that members of this House could benefit from learning how you have managed to continually grow Ontario's apprenticeship systems to create opportunities for our young people and, in particular, apprenticeship training programs which have contributed to our recent success. Mr. Minister, I appreciated your comment previously. I would now ask you to continue in telling us how these programs are going to be of benefit to the members of all skills in Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Again, my colleague from Davenport is absolutely correct. The goal is to ensure that Ontario has the skilled workers it needs. We do have a goal of 26,000 new apprenticeship registrations every year. We're very close—we're well over 24,500—and we expect to hit the goal. We've got a number of tools to achieve that.

First of all, we're investing in the pre-apprenticeship programs I spoke of: almost \$9 million this year, almost 900 people being assisted. We're also investing in the co-op diploma programs, which allow individuals to get the beginning of their apprenticeship training but which also allow them to get a college diploma. We've got almost \$14 million being invested in that this year. We made the announcement about that at Centennial College.

To encourage employers to take on apprentices, we have the apprenticeship training tax credit, and in the budget the Minister of Finance indicated that that was going to be extended, an excellent program to help take people on. We've also got the Ontario youth apprenticeship program to get high school students credits and the beginning of their—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: I have an article from the Cornwall Standard Freeholder that details a \$25,000 grant given to the Lost Villages Historical Society from your slush fund. The article says that the member for the area, the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, heard there was a slush fund available and sought to get his fair share for his riding. The member says "there was no formal application process." Maybe the member is guilty of a little bit too much honesty here. I know behind closed doors the minister will probably say that he broke the code of silence or that he's a stool pigeon or that he squealed, but the truth of the matter is, there's more truth before us today of the evidence of a slush fund. So instead of punishing the member for telling the truth, Minister, will

you just please tell us, was it you or somebody else who let the Liberal members know about your slush fund?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Throughout this province there are volunteer organizations that have done incredible work. So here we have a case where there's an incredibly good, long-standing volunteer organization that has been restoring this site called Stuart House. They've been raising money, putting in countless hours of volunteer work. As Minister of Citizenship, I am proud to invest in that volunteerism. I am proud to ensure that our heritage is not lost. I'm also proud to ensure that communities like Cornwall get help from this government. So if you look at the Lost Villages Historical Society of Long Sault, they've had a building that they treasure, that they didn't want lost. We partnered with the volunteers to preserve our Loyalist heritage. We're proud of partnering with the volunteers of the Cornwall area in preserving Stuart House in Long Sault.

1510

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I'm sure the member knows how to properly ask a question.

Mr. Hudak: In terms of answering my question, that was quite an air ball lofted by the minister there. Minister, I'll ask you directly again—and I ask you, don't go too hard on the member; he's only telling the truth. Don't treat him like a stool pigeon; he's simply being a whistle-blower.

Minister, was it you who told the Liberal caucus that the secret slush fund was available? Was it the Liberal campaign chair/finance minister who told the Liberal members? Secondly, we all know that this grant was not even on the list that you pulled out after we dragged it out of you, kicking and screaming, last week. It wasn't even on the list. So, lastly, is there another secret slush fund that Mike Colle is running behind closed doors?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, it is very clear that there are areas across Ontario that were suffering economically. Cornwall is one of those areas that has been identified, that has been crying out for help. So we made this investment in Cornwall to restore Stuart House, which was, again, run and operated by volunteers whom we are proud to partner with. We're also helping a part of Ontario that is going through troubled waters. We are there. We've been there in Cornwall, and many ministers have been there in Cornwall, to make those investments in eastern Ontario, which needs our help. We are proud to make that investment in volunteerism, heritage preservation and the economic prosperity of the Cornwall area.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, last week, Mustaq Ahmed and Shafiqur Rahman came to this House looking for some answers from you. They came here because your friend Liberal MP Maria Minna said that Bangladeshi Canadian Community Services in my riding did not receive Liberal

slush fund payouts because, and I quote her directly, “With respect, they made a choice to get involved in an election. That’s their prerogative. But from my perspective, it had to be an organization not involved in one party or another.”

Minister, if that is correct, can you explain: Farhana Rahman, Liberal Party member and activist, is president of an out-of-riding group that did get more than \$200,000 in Liberal slush fund money without even applying for it. My question, Mr. Speaker: How can you explain this dichotomy—one rule for Liberals and one for everyone else?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are many identified areas of Toronto, of the GTA, Hamilton, Ottawa—many areas that are underserved, that are not getting enough newcomer services, language training, counselling. They're not getting enough job search workshops. We are investing in areas that need it. This is one of the areas that needed this service, so we partnered with a long-standing organization, COSTI, that was going to provide leadership to provide services in an area that needed them badly. That's what we did.

Mr. Prue: Again, back to the minister: Minister, the BCCS is a registered charitable organization funded by the United Way. It is not a political group. It has never been aligned with any party, not mine and not yours, but your Liberal MP friend has made some serious accusations that could threaten the charitable-status designation of the BCCS. Again, Minister, I ask you to tell this House why your Liberal slush fund punished the BCCS and rewarded an animal welfare agency which is in fact very political and which is aligned to your party.

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is the same member who stood up on his feet and slammed a volunteer organization in Peel region even though the president of that volunteer organization was a card-carrying, proud member of the NDP. He refused to apologize to that organization, which has received funding from the Conservative government, has received funding from the NDP government, and has received ongoing funding from our ministry. He slammed that organization, jeopardized that organization, but he never apologized. Stand up and apologize.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Energy. I know our government has been championing renewables since we took office. My riding is a hub of renewable energy activity, with a number of projects already operating and a few more slated to come online this next year. How far we have come in just a few short years. To think that the opposition wasted—no, squandered—13 years and watched opportunities in renewable energy just go by. Ontario has great renewable energy potential, and they couldn't see that. What a waste. Fortunately, our government sees the untapped resources our province has to offer and we are turning the wind and the sun into clean, emissions-free

power that can only improve the quality of life for all Ontarians.

Minister, you have announced another 14 projects under the standard offer program. How will these projects contribute to providing Ontario homes and businesses with the energy they need?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): Mr. Speaker, through you, the member for Huron–Bruce has done an outstanding job for her constituents on renewable energy. Since we came to office, we've gone from last to first in wind power. Since we took office, we are now the leading jurisdiction in North America on solar power. Since we took office, we have cut coal emissions below 1990 levels and cut the NO_x, the SO_x and the CO₂ accordingly.

This government has begun to address climate change in a substantial and meaningful way, all the while empowering our farmers and citizens to share in the remarkable bounty of this country's renewable potential.

Mrs. Mitchell: Minister, Huron–Bruce is very proud that they are providing Ontario homes and businesses with a supply of clean, emissions-free power. It's unfortunate that the opposition chooses to play politics and ridicule the hard-working Ontarians who are building these most important projects. We know all too well how the opposition likes to fudge the facts when the truth doesn't suit them. They'd like to have people believe that we aren't moving to combat climate change or to bring clean, renewable energy projects online. They also don't tell the same people about their sorry record on energy, about the cancelled conservation programs, the increase in smog emissions, global warming emissions from coal, the lack of investment in new generation. No, they don't tell them about that.

Minister, you need to set the record straight. Maybe the opposition didn't hear you the first time. Can you make it crystal clear for them and let them know the progress that this government has made to clean up the energy system in Ontario?

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The opposition wants to heckle and chortle, but let's remember something: The Tory government did nothing on conservation. They did nothing on renewables. They put a price cap on energy that effectively shut down the province's redevelopment of electricity. The NDP cancelled all conservation programs.

John Tory says we need more nuclear power and then he won't tell us where he's going to put it. The Tories want to keep the coal plants open. What's even worse is, Howard Hampton wants them up north but not down south. He's confused about his geography. Moreover, he's confused about global warming and their failure to address those issues, their failure to take the bull by the horns, as we have, on renewable power: number 1 in wind in Canada, number 1 in solar in the world, anaerobic digesters—clean, green, renewable power that will power this province into the future.

Those parties have no plan, no idea and no thought about climate change and cleaning up our environment. Shame on all of them.

1520

PETITIONS

CONSENT TO TREATMENT

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): “To the government of the Ontario:

“We, the undersigned, draw the attention of the House to the following:

“Whereas the Health Care Consent Act of Ontario gives to all health practitioners, indiscriminately, the sole authority to determine whether or not a child of any age has the capacity to give or refuse consent to treatment proposed for him or her” (HCCA subsection 10(1); “and

“Whereas many of the health care practitioners who are required to make such judgments have neither the training nor the knowledge of child development such that their judgments could be considered informed; and

“Whereas health care practitioners in the family planning industry are notoriously biased in their approach to supplying abortions and chemical contraceptives/abortifacients to minors; and

“Whereas the HCCA is unconstitutional as it provides no opportunity for parents to prevent health care practitioners from providing inappropriate treatment to their child before it is administered, nor any mechanism for redress afterwards;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Health Care Consent Act to prohibit health care practitioners from administering a plan of treatment proposed for a child who lives under the care and control of a custodial parent without the prior consent of the custodial parent, whether or not the health care practitioner is of the opinion that the child is capable with respect to the plan of treatment.”

I send this petition to the table with Dillon.

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): “To the Legislature of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care with respect to Bill 171, Health System Improvements Act, 2006 (Schedule O Kinesiology Act, 2006, Schedule P Naturopathy and Homeopathy Act, 2006], and respectfully suggest that Bill 171 in its present format is not responsive to the needs of the Ontario public, is unfair to RNCs and other natural health professionals and will be to the detriment to our access to natural therapies in the province of Ontario and in Canada;

"Therefore we request that the minister amend Bill 171 to safeguard RNCs and other unregulated health professionals and modalities to ensure their healthy co-existence and practising rights so that we may continue to benefit from their health care services."

I'll affix my signature and give it to page Tom.

COURT SUPPORT STAFF

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I present a petition that has been signed by Attorney General employees at the Newmarket courthouse and representing some 1,400 staff across the province. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario;

"Whereas 1,400 members of the Attorney General's court support staff who are working under the flexible, part-time FPT model, otherwise referred to as appendix 32 under a collective agreement between Management Board of Cabinet, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union ... negotiated in the spring of 2005, are working hundreds of hours per week in the service of the Attorney General for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas under the FPT agreement many court support staff are working as many as 20 hours or more per week for which payment is being withheld and will not be paid until months later; and

"Whereas when the makeup pay does eventually get paid, up to 50% may be lost to taxes because of the taxation year into which the payment may fall; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff who are being forced to work under these conditions are single mothers with fixed living expenses, who incur employment-related expenses such as child care and travel costs for those hours that they are required to work but for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas in many cases these expenses are impossible to pay without the offsetting income which is being withheld by the Attorney General under the FPT agreement; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff have been left no other choice but to resign from these impossible working conditions and, in many cases, are being forced onto the welfare rolls by the very government for which they are providing hundreds of hours of work for which they are not being paid in a timely manner; and

"Whereas the FPT agreement which is causing such hardship for employees of the Attorney General was negotiated by and entered into between the Ministry of the Attorney General, Management Board of Cabinet and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union; and

"Whereas the employees to whom this agreement applies insist that the terms of the agreement and their practical implications were not fully disclosed to them at the time the agreement was proposed for ratification; and

"Whereas these employees affected by this agreement have repeatedly appealed to OPSEU, the Attorney Gen-

eral and the Premier to point out the unfairness of being forced to work hundreds of hours without being paid for that work and the hardship this practice is causing in the lives of many employees; and

"Whereas repeated appeals to the Attorney General and to the Premier that they step in to ensure fair treatment of Attorney General employees are being ignored;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the Premier, the Attorney General and the Chair of Management Board to take whatever steps are necessary to change the offensive provisions of the FPT agreement as set out in appendix 32 and ensure that the Attorney General's court support staff receive fair treatment as employees of the government and that among other unfair provisions of the agreement, the practice of withholding pay for hours worked cease immediately."

I am pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'll sign this petition.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings):

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I’m pleased to add my signature.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has directed Lakeridge Health to cut mental health and addiction services and children’s mental health services in order to balance its budget; and

“Whereas the ministry has directed these cuts, bypassing the Central East Local Health Integration Network, whose director has stated ‘there will be no reduction in mental health and addiction services within the Central East LHIN’; and

“Whereas these cuts will likely transfer costs rather than save them, putting additional pressure on Lakeridge’s emergency department, Durham police, Whitby Mental Health and social service providers; and

“Whereas the Central East already receives amongst the lowest per capita hospital funding in the province;

“We, the undersigned, request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to revisit this decision and ensure Durham residents receive appropriate support for adults and children who need treatment for mental health and addictions.”

I affix my name in support.

1530

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I have a petition from some of the hardworking volunteers from the Cornwall Township Historical Society and the Lost Villages Historical Society, two organizations that work diligently to profile the history and heritage of past and present immigrants in my riding. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

“Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

“Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Enact Bill 25, an act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario.”

As I agree with this petition, I will affix my signature and send it with Tom.

SMITHS FALLS ECONOMY

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton):

“Whereas Hershey Canada has announced the closure of its Smiths Falls plant, putting 500 people out of work; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has announced that it will close the Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls prematurely in 2009, putting another 800-plus people out of work; and

“Whereas these closures will result in additional job losses at local suppliers to Hershey, such as dairy farms, local tourism operators and all local businesses; and

“Whereas the 9,200 residents of Smiths Falls will be devastated by these 1,300-plus job losses;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows”—all 7,000 of them:

“That the government of Ontario continue to work with Hershey to reverse the decision to close the Smiths Falls plant;

“That the government of Ontario immediately fund infrastructure projects in Smiths Falls like the hospital redevelopment in order to attract new industry”—we’re still waiting for that;

“That the government of Ontario complete the four-laning of Highway 7 and the reconstruction of Highway 15 at an accelerated pace;

“That the government of Ontario postpone the closure of the Rideau Regional Centre at least until it has replaced the 800 jobs with an equal number of new public sector jobs; and

“That the government of Ontario create a fund equivalent to the northern Ontario heritage fund to attract investment to eastern Ontario.”

I’m proud to sign that.

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this petition is to inform the government of the unfair conditions that people on ODSP and/or CDPP live with;

"Whereas their struggle to survive on pensions that inadequately cover the current cost of living and their inability to keep up with the cost-of-living index makes it hard to survive;

"Whereas not only can they not survive on what they receive, they cannot even buy gifts for family members or friends;

"We, the undersigned of the petition, ask that the Legislature both make the cost of living for people on disability more affordable and help them by giving a Christmas bonus."

MULTIPLE LEGAL PARENTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the appeal court of Ontario on January 2, 2007, ruled that 'a child may have more than two legal parents';

"Whereas that sets a precedent and leaves many unanswered questions which could result in possible multiple legal parents and unknown devastating ramifications to children and families of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to appeal the Ontario Court decision, so that various levels of government may thoroughly study the personal, societal and legal implications of allowing more than two legal parents."

I've also signed this.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I have a petition that's been sent to me by Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin.

"Whereas the population of the greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units, with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions to social issues and human services;...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the 2007-08 Ontario budget implementing measures to strengthen Ontario's families be passed without delay, and that the first priority for the allocation of new funding in meeting the government of Ontario's commitment to fairness for families flow to the social services agencies serving cities within the 905 belt, and that funding for programs to serve the 905 belt be allocated to established or growing agencies located within" that said belt.

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this as well.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

OPPOSITION DAY

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is the fourth McGuinty cabinet minister to fall under the cloud of scandal;

That, in the opinion of this House, this scandal is a direct result of his failure to ensure the highest level of scrutiny over grants paid out of a year-end slush fund;

That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration should be expected to be able to answer the most basic questions about these grants, such as on what basis the money was granted and what accountability measures are in place to ensure that the money is used for its intended purpose;

That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration should table the list of the "hundreds" of groups to whom he spoke about these grants;

That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration should table the written criteria he used to determine how the grants were allocated; and

That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration should table any written correspondence between his office and any groups that have received funding outside of existing formal government programs, including any and all application documents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Tory has moved opposition day number 4. Mr. Tory.

Mr. Tory: I wanted to start today by going back to a matter that we discussed in this House before. It's a quote

that I think is a very relevant quote, given by one Hershell Ezrin, former chief of staff to Premier David Peterson, a very active Liberal himself. He said on TVOntario a couple of weeks ago in discussing the lottery scandal, which I guess was the third of the four scandals we're talking about here, that the standard is set by the boss. Of course, by that he meant the standard of behaviour, the standard of scrutiny of taxpayers' money, the standard that's expected of people in the cabinet and in public life is set by the boss, in this case Premier Dalton McGuinty.

What standard are we talking about here? I think we're talking about the sort of standard that the people have the right to expect of all of us who are here in the Legislature. Why are we here? I think we're here to oversee the taxpayers' money. There's a standard people expect in that regard. We're here because they would expect us to make sure there is fairness and equity between and among various groups in society who are always looking for things the government might do for them or with them. We are here because they expect us to set a certain standard in respect of transparency. Care must not only be taken with respect to things like the taxpayers' money, but must be seen to be taken. So these are the things that the people expect of us when we're here. They expect us to be here to help people. In order to help people, that means that the governors, the legislators, have to be accessible to the groups. When there's money to be given out, groups have to know about it so they can know who to call, when to call, what to submit and what they could ask for in terms of programs that might help them. They expect us to be here to wisely allocate what we know are scarce public resources.

Today of all days, the day on which thousands and thousands of people will line up across the province to, admittedly late, send in their income tax returns with millions upon millions of their money they've worked hard to earn, to be sent to this government and the government of Canada, they expect that we're going to oversee that money and wisely allocate it. And they expect us to put the fundamentals in place to ensure prosperity so that we can have enough money to pay for more health care and more education and so on.

Well, you know, this story kind of starts off well in that what you have here is the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration indicating that literally hundreds of groups have approached him saying they need money for one or the other purposes of their work. You know, at no time, with the exception of one or two groups that seem to have no track record at all, has anybody in this House, on any side, questioned the work done by these groups. There is always the implication that somehow we question the work done by these groups. What we have questioned is the fact that these groups, whoever they are, were given huge sums of taxpayers' money—no application form, no process, no interview, no audit after the fact to see if value for money was received by the taxpayers. That is what is at the essence of this entire discussion.

1540

The minister did start off well. The implication was that he was a very accessible person. And do you know what? He is. I see him all the time out in the community, because I'm out there myself in front of a lot of these groups. He is accessible. I believe him when he says that there are hundreds of groups that ask him for the money. The problem is, that's where the good-news part of the story ends, because after that there is no log where he actually wrote down the hundreds of people who told him they needed money. There is no application form. There was no requirement for financial statements or any other kind of business plan or anything on the part of these people. There was no interview process. There was no requirement that anybody ever report in on what they did with the money.

These are all things that are bare minimum standards that the taxpayers should have the right to expect that we would do in each and every instance in which any taxpayers' money is involved at all. I can tell you, as someone who has run a very large company—in fact, more than one: There is no chance whatsoever that you'd be able to send out, even as the CEO, a cheque for a quarter of a million dollars without any paperwork. There's no chance. You can't just phone somebody up and say, "Send a cheque out to so-and-so for a quarter of a million dollars." It doesn't happen that way.

In non-profit organizations—I served on the board of the United Way for years. I can tell you: When they come to allocate the resources they take in—very much like the government does—in trust from donors, they have a rigorous process of going through who gets the money and filling out application forms and being interviewed and so on and so forth. But in this case we have the minister picking personally—he picked personally. The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh says that there was no process. He got a grant for some group because he happened to be asked, as a member of the Liberal caucus, whether he had anybody who needed any money. But none of the rest of us got asked. The organization in Richmond Hill that has seven out of seven board members who were donors, that has the Liberal candidate as a director, that has the address being the Liberal riding president's address, they got a huge sum of money, and most of the other groups in the Iranian Canadian community knew absolutely nothing about the fact that there was even any money available. This is not right.

You know what? The minister may even have picked the right groups, but we will never have any way of knowing that because all the groups that could have asked didn't know they could, and when the groups on the secret list that knew about it did either put in their application or just got phoned to see if they wanted some money, there was no objective evidence put into the file at all so that anybody could tell whether these people were deserving or were the best to have it or were appropriate to have it at all. Maybe they were the best.

We will never know that, because of the way this government has done this.

What it does is it leaves open the suggestion, which has been backed up by some of the facts that have been disclosed here, that some of this money was allocated on the basis of political partisanship, was allocated on the basis of who you knew. Even the Premier says, in the case of some of this arts funding—he asked why we didn't ask any questions about some of the arts organizations that got money, as he put it, without documentation, without a formal process. That's because we didn't know until he admitted it on Friday.

Then we have the Minister of Culture come in here and say that the Premier was totally misinformed, that there was an extensive process and all kinds of documents. We want to know who's got the facts straight here, who is speaking the truth. We don't really know, because it clearly can't be both.

There is good work done by these groups, but the bottom line is—take it from the media reports and the commentary—the oversight of these groups, when it comes to the taxpayers' money, is nonexistent. Let me quote from the Ottawa Citizen. They said, "As any federal bureaucrat who has even a remote acquaintance with scandal during the Chrétien-Martin years can testify, a program that hands out public money at the end of a fiscal year, absent a proper application process and routine oversight, is ripe for abuse."

"The Ontario Liberals appear not to have learned this lesson." That's the Ottawa Citizen saying that.

When it comes to fairness and equity between and among all the groups who might like to have had some of that money, lots of groups who are doing a great job for newcomers to Canada never knew there was any money. How are they doing in that regard, when only Liberal MPPs know about the selection process? Let me use the words the Sudbury Star used to describe this program. They called it a "shockingly arbitrary and haphazard grant program." That's what they called it. So we failed—the government has—on the test here of fairness and equity between and among groups.

Finally, transparency: that we have to do and be seen to do. How has the Liberal government, how has Mr. McGuinty, done on that? In that case, we have here the quote from, again, the Ottawa Citizen, where they say: "The Liberals have trouble with transparency. Their majority on a legislative committee has blocked an opposition request for the provincial Auditor General to review the controversial file and to report back before the next election. Yet it's obvious that a proper audit is needed to restore public confidence that these grants bring value for money." I agree.

I want to conclude with a quote from Mr. Justice Gomery, because I think that the McGuinty Liberals have learned no lesson whatsoever from the whole Gomery experience, which is being repeated here. It's being repeated here. This is just like another sponsorship scandal. Mr. Justice Gomery said as follows: "Good intentions"—which the minister keeps talking about

every day in this House while not answering the questions—"are not an excuse for maladministration of this magnitude."

When it comes to those goals of fairness and equity between and among groups, safeguarding the taxpayers' money and making sure that there is not only transparency in terms of talking about it but it's seen to be done, the McGuinty Liberals have badly failed the taxpayers. I would hope that all members will decide they can vote for this resolution on the basis that it will send a signal that we've said, "Enough is enough. Enough stink in this place is enough." Let's get to the bottom of this and call the auditor in and finally deliver for the people, for those taxpayers who are lining up today to send in their income tax returns, the kind of transparency, the kind of safeguarding of their money and the kind of fairness that they have the right to expect from us.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon in support of the motion that was brought by the leader of the official opposition. I do so because there has been a significant difficulty, in my own riding, of groups trying to understand how it is that year after year they've been attempting to get some support from their provincial government and have not been able to do so. Then, lo and behold, without anybody knowing how, suddenly the information starts trickling out that a couple of specifically chosen groups were able to receive money without any kind of transparency, without any kind of process, without any kind of opportunity that was opened up to all groups.

I have to say that, over two years, \$32 million is a heck of a lot of money. Do I agree that these groups absolutely need to get some support? Do I agree that they have absolutely enormous challenges to work with their communities and to provide the kinds of support, the kinds of connections, the kinds of programs—just the absolutely amazing work that they do? I absolutely agree that that work needs to be done and that the best ones to do it, in fact, are community-based, grassroots cultural organizations. I think that's absolutely essential and necessary and appropriate.

The issue, of course, as we know, that we're debating this afternoon is the extent to which this program or lack of program came about, the extent to which the information started to become public and yet no process was ever public, no opportunity was ever made public, no transparency had ever existed. My own caucus and the Conservative caucus as well are on our feet every day asking that there be an appropriate review by the Auditor General about how exactly this all came to pass.

When I talk about the various groups in my community that I've talked to about their frustration and their anxiety and their difficulties in meeting the needs of their community members—those groups run the gamut. I had been working proudly with many of those groups long before I was in this place. In fact, the very organization that was able to obtain some dollars from the govern-

ment, the Settlement and Integration Services Organization in Hamilton—I can recall, when I was working in a legal clinic, before I was even in any elected position, when that group began to come into being, through some of the work of the Social Planning and Research Council in our community. I can remember a dialogue with those groups 20 years ago about the need to make sure that grassroots organizations were able to provide some of the very important programs that were being identified as necessary to help newcomers and immigrants in their ability to succeed in their new home, in their new country, in their new community. Talking to those groups over the years about the social isolation, for example, of women particularly, who in many cases are not in the workforce so they don't have the same kinds of day-to-day connections with the new culture, if you want to call it that, that they're experiencing in Canada, and ways to find opportunities for those women to feel part of their own community as well as part of the broader community, to help them learn the language, to be able to access some of the basic necessities of life in their new community—that's one of the examples of what some of these groups turn their attention to when they talk about the programs that they need to provide in their communities.

1550

I also recently was meeting with a number of different community groups. One of them—more than one, actually—was talking about the concern that they have for the young people, particularly the teenagers in their communities, because similarly, these young people are kind of trapped between the culture of their parents and the culture of their friends. They are trying to assess all of this messaging from both of these different cultures, and oftentimes experience great stress and great anxiety. Teenagers already have a lot of stresses and a lot of anxieties and a lot of pressures that they have to deal with at that age, and this added level of challenge for them is something that many of these groups are trying to work out with their youth. So again, those are the kinds of programs that some of these organizations are looking to help their youth with.

Also, I know there are issues around foreign-trained professionals, around accreditation, around access to the system and the myriad of hoops that the people have to go through in order to even figure out how to go about getting accreditation. The other issue is the one that, notwithstanding the fact that accreditation may be received or obtained, barriers still exist in the employment market for newcomers and for immigrants in terms of the ever-elusive Canadian experience. Again, a number of groups have raised with me the fear that they have that this is a false barrier and it's a barrier that simply keeps them out of the employment field. It's one that has to be broken down.

All of these types of programs and all of these goals that the groups that I've spoken to have are extremely important. Of course, the Settlement and Integration Services Organization of Hamilton is one of the more

long-standing and all-encompassing groups in terms of the number of culture and faith backgrounds and languages that are spoken there. Every time there is a new significant group of refugees particularly that are coming into our community, it is SISO that pulls together and works with our social services department in Hamilton to find ways to make sure that these 100 or 200 or 300 or 400, for example, Somali refugees are brought into our community and are given a good start in terms of finding a place to settle and a place to begin to grow some roots in the community.

When I've met with people like SISO over the years—and, Mr. Speaker, you'll know that today I asked the question about the gentlemen who was here—Ram Kamath, the current president of the Hindu Samaj Temple—in fact, for those of you who weren't perhaps tuned in earlier in the afternoon, part of the frustration is in my own city, the city of Hamilton, one of the worst backlash hate crimes to take place in Canada after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States was the ignorant and evil burning of one of our temples, a Hindu temple, in Hamilton. I say "ignorant" because the people who burned that temple didn't know the difference between Muslim, Hindu and Arab. They had no idea about any kind of cultural realities that exist in terms of the very diverse makeup of our community. They saw people of that particular region or people of that particular colour and dress and they just assumed that somehow these people were terrorists, and they thought it was okay to go and torch that temple.

After that occurrence took place in the city of Hamilton, my entire community pulled together to try to deal with the pain, the hurt and the fear, quite frankly—the fear that, without rising up as a community and fighting against that nasty attack, more could happen. So that's exactly what happened.

At the time, I was on city council. The mayor of the day put together an effort called Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative. That initiative was exactly that. It was saying that our community is one community. A poster was developed by a multi-faith group of community leaders in Hamilton. It has the symbols of all the different religions on this poster and it says that an injury to one is an injury to all. That's the point of us trying to pull together as a community to say, "If you're injuring the Hindu Samaj Temple and the Hindu people of our community, then you're also injuring the Catholic people, you're injuring the Jewish people and you're injuring the Sikh people. You're injuring every single group. You're injuring those who don't have an official religion that they affiliate with or that they were raised in or that they practise."

When that happened, the city struggled very hard to try to come together and make something positive of it, and the Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative was a positive thing that came from it. In fact, even to this day, six years later, that organization has kind of morphed into a new initiative, which is called Hamilton's Centre for Civic Inclusion, a new entity that is trying to

become more proactive in all of the pieces that it takes to have a community that is socially inclusive, where everybody is able to take on the responsibility of all people in the community having connections and being able to participate in the social, cultural, political and recreational life of our city.

When that fire occurred and when our community tried to start to rebuild, the city of Hamilton at the time had a small amount of grant that it was able to provide, but of course, with the downloading that it faced, the city had very few resources to help. When I got elected here, I made a commitment to the Hindu Samaj Temple and to the leadership there that I would be doing everything I could to work on their behalf to make sure that the message was getting clearly sent over to the government.

I raised the issue several times here in the Legislature. I have the documentation of all of the times that I raised this issue in the Legislature asking the McGuinty Liberals, begging the McGuinty Liberals to please become a partner in the rebuilding of the Hindu Samaj Temple and community centre. My pleas go back to October 18, 2005, March 2, 2006, May 29, 2006. On October 24, 2005, I sent a letter to the Premier begging the Premier to find a way, whether it was through citizenship and immigration—right here in the letter, it says—whether it was through some kind of fund you can find through victims of crime—something, anything that would help this group rebuild their temple because they had tapped out their community in building the original temple, so when it was left for them to rebuild after the fire, they simply didn't have the resources. They had called upon every effort in the past already to build the temple in the first place.

Here we are, six years later, and imagine the shock of those community activists, those community leaders in the Hindu community in Hamilton, when they found out that, after being told by the Premier of this province that no funds were available, after being told that funding was not something that goes to religious groups, that that's not what gets done, after being told that even though they got a little bit of money from Trillium, some \$31,000, they'd better say nice things about the government and thank them for their \$31,000 grant, because that's the way it works—this is what they were told. So they were shocked, a couple of weeks ago, when this issue started to become public; they were shocked because they thought they had made their case. They thought that for six years they were making people in this place and representatives of their own in their community well aware of the dire straits that they were in as a result of one of the most ugly, horrific hate crimes that I can remember certainly in my community.

1600

But instead of acknowledging and recognizing that there are groups like this all over the place, so that any opportunity for funding needs to be wide open, needs to be obvious, needs to be transparent, needs to have criteria, we have a minister who, to this day, refuses to admit he did anything wrong. When we have groups like

this that are just stunned, that are just shocked at the fact that because they didn't happen to have the inside track for some reason, they didn't happen to have the inside track like some of the other groups did, then they are shut out of the process—well, there was no process, so they were shut out of the funding. They were shut out of the opportunity to make real progress in this rebuilding effort.

When I meet with groups like the one I met with most recently—it was actually a community meeting of a number of different groups, but it took place at a facility called the Beam Education Centre. It's an education centre that has been up and running for a little while now, put together by the Turkish community. Of course, again, at that community meeting—and interestingly enough, that community meeting took place on the Saturday of the Easter long weekend. I think it was April 5 or a date around there. I had already heard—this is before the story that we're talking about today that the motion stems from in terms of the minister's lack of accountability and refusal to be accountable for this slush fund. But before it became public, I had heard from my friend the member for Beaches–East York that they were getting complaints from communities in the Beaches riding about this issue. People were saying, "Groups are getting money and nobody knows really why they got the money." The actual established group that for all intents and purposes is the one that should be receiving the legitimacy of the grants from the government had no idea that there was even going to be any money available. They were shocked to see the group that did get the money, and we know very well that it turned out that the group that did get the money was very well connected with the Liberal government. It looked extremely, extremely bad on the McGuinty Liberals. All of this I knew already because it hadn't become public yet and we were checking our facts, but the member from Beaches–East York had mentioned it to me in passing.

So when I went to this group on the first Saturday in April, we were talking about a number of different things and they were saying, "We're really frustrated. There has to be some kind of place where we can find some help. We don't want tons of money, but we need a little bit of help from the provincial government to help us with the programs that we are undertaking to help our community members in their settlement here in Hamilton."

I had known that they were going to be asking that question because they had told me in advance. At that time, I said to them, "I'm hearing rumours about some money that has been given away." But coincidentally, because I knew I was going to this meeting and I knew they were going to be asking about this question, I had had my staff at my riding office do some research with the legislative library, asking the legislative library to review what grants are available for community groups. I have the documentation right here. It's all very coincidental. My staff had asked the question on March 28 to legislative research in the legislative library: "Can you provide as much information as may be available on

provincial government grants, programs, funding available for new immigrants, whether it be employment training, ESL, funds for cultural programs, non-government offices specific to providing services for immigrants, refugees, even festivals? It's desperate timing and I need information as soon as possible."

Of course, we got the response from the legislative library. Keep in mind: This is after the slush fund had already been going out the door by probably a couple of days. From the legislative library we get this response that says, "You asked for funding information on government grants and other program funding that would help new immigrants. You gave examples," blah, blah, blah. "Please see the enclosed resources."

You go to the enclosed resources and there's a page that says, "Government of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration." Unfortunately, they talk about professions and trades; Ontario business programs; Ontario bridge training; "How can I improve my English?"; Ontario Trillium Foundation; Ontario Arts Council—that's it. That's all there is. Nowhere does it say, "By the way, if you're a group that's needy and does good work that we're impressed with, just call the minister's office and we might have a little bit of slush fund money. We have about \$20 million hanging around. You might actually get some if you know what number to call and you call the right person." It doesn't say that here.

The bottom line is, it was extremely disheartening, to be polite, when I found out that within a couple of days of my asking the legislative library specifically to provide information where I could send these needy groups, these groups that are doing such great work, an official place to go for their government of Ontario to help them with their programs—and it came out dry; it came up empty. There was nothing there. Nada. Then, within a week or two after the meeting I had, when I sent around this document—I made copies and gave it to everybody—lo and behold, there was money. You just had to be in the know. You just had to know that the minister had this little slush fund going. You just had to know that it would help if you might have maybe a Liberal or two on your board. You just had to know that the government didn't really want any application process, didn't really need anything that was official. You just had to pick up the phone or call your friend who's a friend of a friend who sits on the other side of this House.

That is absolutely wrong. If you're going to provide funding for programs, then that funding has to be made available to everybody. It's basic fairness. Fairness is all we wanted. Thirty-two million dollars in two years could have helped a number of organizations in my community. It could have helped the Hindu Samaj Temple, as I mentioned earlier today. It could have helped the Somali community that is struggling hard to get programs in place to help the refugees who are coming from Somalia, or similarly the Sudanese community. We have many Sudanese refugees who are coming to Hamilton. That community is organized and they need some help too.

The Portuguese Information Centre has been around a long time in my community, but their sources of funding have been drying up. They were getting a lot of money from the city, but of course cities can't afford to fund these kinds of activities anymore because of the crush of downloading that this province still refuses to fix. So because of that, our Portuguese Information Centre has been looking for extra funding for a couple of years now. I've had to tell them over and over again, "There are no pockets of funding available at the provincial level. They don't exist, unfortunately." How was I to know? How was I to know that I was carrying the wrong membership card in my pocket, and that if I was carrying the right one, I would have known all about the \$32-million slush fund over the last couple of years?

How about the Portuguese Information Centre? How about the Beam Education Centre? I just told them a couple of weeks ago—they looked at the website with me and there was nothing there at all. How about the Bangladeshi community? How about the Afro-Canadian Caribbean Association that just had a break-in in their office two weeks ago; in fact, on the very day that we were commemorating at city hall the end of trading in slave labour? On the very day that we were commemorating that anniversary, their offices were broken into, and they need all kinds of support to try to re-create their office after the attack. They could use some of these dollars.

Ultimately, that's the point. The point is, you read headline after headline: "'Colle-gate' Affair Has Managed to put Liberals in a Box." "Yet Another McGuinty Government Scandal; Yet Another Cabinet Minister Left Unscathed." I think that's the very crux of the motion from the official opposition: that we have yet another scandal, another situation where the government has proven that it's not doing the right thing in terms of transparency, in terms of process, in terms of basic fairness in this province, yet they're not prepared to take ownership of this. They're not prepared to do the right thing and allow the Auditor General to review, in time for the next election—before the next election—what was really going on.

I have to say, I think everybody in this place would agree that the absolute necessity is for us to acknowledge and value and support the work that is being done by so many of these grassroots cultural organizations across the province. Absolutely that needs to happen, absolutely it needs to be built into the work that we do around here, but it needs to be built in in a formal, appropriate way whereby every group out there has a chance to access some of those resources. It cannot continue to be the way that it has been by this government. Ultimately, this government needs to own up to the fact that they made a huge error in judgment and that what they did was absolutely inappropriate and unbecoming a government that claims to have transparency as one of its values.

1610

I don't know what the values are across the way, but I've got to tell you, this scandal stinks to high heaven and

it needs to be uncovered to the absolute last penny so that we can know whether or not there was real wrongdoing in terms of the process that was undertaken, or the lack thereof. It's unacceptable that we are having this kind of scandal here in the province of Ontario.

So I ask the McGuinty Liberals and I ask the minister and I ask the Premier: Do the right thing, do the fair thing, do the appropriate thing, and now, after the fact, make sure that we can get to and that the residents of this province can get to what really went on and what's really happening.

I have to say this as well: At the end of the day, whether there's a program posted on the Internet or not, the bottom line is that it's disrespectful to all of the communities in this province to have done what you Liberals did with this funding scandal. It is disrespectful and inappropriate.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me the chance and the opportunity to speak against the motion brought by the opposition leader.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Again?

Mr. Ramal: Of course, because it's very important to speak about our record as a government.

Let me tell you the story. Many people came to Ontario from different parts of the globe to be a part of this beautiful province—from India, from China, from the Middle East, from many different parts of the globe—because they believed strongly that this province embraced everyone. This province is built on multiculturalism and diversity, and people come to enjoy that peace and tranquility which all of us enjoy in this province.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Renfrew.

Mr. Ramal: People come with few things; some of them come with no ability to speak the language. Many people come to this beautiful province with high skills and education. In many different times, in many different years, they have been ignored by many different governments—the Conservatives to the NDP—until we had a government that recognized their value, that embraced their skills and abilities to participate and be great citizens of this province.

We are privileged to have a minister who understands deeply about the importance of engaging every person in this province. That minister, according to the Leader of the Opposition, is a very accessible person who travelled the province from Windsor to Ottawa, from Thunder Bay to Hamilton. He never missed any opportunity to engage with all the multicultural communities. He talked to them about their issues, he talked to them about their communities, he talked to them about how we can improve their lives and how we can help them to fit and integrate beautifully in this province.

That's why the Leader of the Opposition is jealous, because he's not able to communicate as the minister is with those multicultural communities. The minister has a passion; he understands their needs and what they want.

He works hard with them and visits them. He's trying to address their issues.

I had a chance to visit many communities with the Honourable Mike Colle, and many communities wanted to speak to him, to speak to a person who knows them, a person who cares about them. That's why many communities across the province of Ontario feel Mr. Colle is one of them. Whether from India or from China or from the Middle East or from Europe—from any part of the globe—they feel Mike Colle is one of them.

It's important that a person who has the job as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has the ability to communicate and connect with every person who lives in the province of Ontario. That's why many opposition members are jealous of that position—because he established a great relationship. He told them, "The government will come to you. You don't have to come to the government. The government is working for you, working to make your life better, to help you integrate and fit in to be able to succeed, to give you the lift to walk with every person in the province of Ontario, with every community in the province of Ontario." That's what Minister Colle has done while he has been the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and he continues to do a great job on behalf of all of us in this great province.

Minister Colle and our government recognize the importance of many people, many talented people who want to be great Ontarians. That's why he worked very hard with them to create and pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act. That bill was very important. The honourable member was a part of it and he knows how important it was to all of us—for the doctors, professionals, engineers, pharmacists, nurses and teachers who want to be working in the province of Ontario and who want to be contributors to the economy of the province of Ontario. That's why he brought that bill. He worked hard to establish a great relationship with them and he appointed a fairness commissioner to oversee conduct across the province of Ontario. The government did this job and that minister led on this great issue to be a great advocate on behalf of all the newcomers to the province of Ontario.

I know so many different communities might be upset because they aren't thinking about the support Mr. Colle is trying to give them, because they never got used to it in the past through the PC or NDP governments. This is a new thing that came with the minister. He established it because he knows very well that those groups need help badly. Without his support and without the government's support, they cannot survive and they cannot contribute to the great economy of Ontario. That is why we know that we have a lot of jobs ahead of us. We have a lot of work to do in order to acknowledge and to support all the various groups in the province of Ontario because all of them do a great job for their communities, and also help newcomers fit in, integrate and be great Ontarians, to be full citizens and participants in this great province.

That's why some support comes to SISO in Hamilton. The member from Hamilton East was saying that she got

nothing for her city. I went with my other colleague to the city of Hamilton many different times to listen to their concerns while we were consulting people on Bill 124. They have a great community and a great organization called SISO. They're doing a great job for the Hamilton region to help many newcomers fit in and learn about the society of Ontario. Also, we have a lot of different organizations. I will give you an example: the WIL unemployment centre in London, the London Cross-Cultural Learner Centre, LUSO, Maytree Foundation—many different organizations across the province. They are working night and day in order to serve many different communities and many different newcomers to help them fit in and integrate. This is a job that Minister Colle and this government are doing for newcomers to help them be part of this great province of Ontario.

The NDP thought so many different times that they are the great champion for the newcomers, but Minister Colle and our government fit them into our agenda, worked with them, embraced them and gave them the support they needed badly, which they never got for years. That's why there is jealousy on the opposite side for the job that we are doing. That's why they're trying to create some kind of obstacle, some kind of issues, from non-issues. We understand that we have a duty in this province to benefit and utilize the money that comes from taxpayers and to give it to many different communities, agencies and programs to help us as a government to assist many different groups and many different communities, to give them, like other communities, equal footing in order to give them the chance to be able to contribute to this economy.

We have a lot of jobs to do ahead of us. So many communities probably didn't get support at the present time, but our government continues to listen to them and is willing to work with them in the future to address their issues and to help them be supported because they need support.

1620

It's very difficult when you see a community working by themselves and they have no support from government, especially when it comes to finding a job, fitting in, integrating, learning the language, especially in this nation. My colleague from London North Centre did a study about demographic change in Ontario and in this nation, and she said it clearly and loudly on many different occasions: "This province cannot exist without immigration." Therefore, the immigrants who come to Ontario are not going to be left alone. They need support, not just by talking and putting on celebrations for them but also by action, support by creating programs for them, giving them the money, giving them what they need, giving them the ability to fit into society. We cannot just tell people to come and then leave them alone by themselves and create ghettos in our society. That is not our strategy. That is not our direction.

We have one direction, one goal: Everyone who comes here will be embraced, will be respected, will be

honoured, will be supported. Our Premier has said it many different times. This is a province not only for the wealthy, not only for the healthy, not only for the people who have been here generation after generation, but this province is for everyone who comes who wants to be a great Ontarian. This is our philosophy; this is our strategy. We want to continue to be a great advocate on behalf of all the people in the province of Ontario, a great advocate on behalf of all the newcomers and also the mainstream community, because it's the only way. By helping people to integrate, to fit in, you're going to create a great society, a great multicultural community built on diversity, on love, tranquillity and peace. That's our strategy. That's our direction.

We're looking forward to working with Ontarians in the future in the same fashion, in the same way, without any hesitation. Despite all these scary tactics that come from the opposition leader and his crew, we're going to continue to do a great job on behalf of the people of Ontario in order to support everyone who wants to be an Ontarian, who wants to come to Ontario.

Thank you for allowing me to speak against this motion which creates a lot of anxiety. Many people stop me on the street and say, "What is the opposition doing? What is the NDP doing? They have nothing to complain about. They have to work on something tangible, something important, not just go on putting down this group and creating some kind of division between this group and other groups." That's not the way you run a government. You run a government for everyone, for everyone despite their background, their colour, their religion. That is our direction. This is our philosophy. This is a government I believe in and am proud to be a part of.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I serve here as the critic for education as well as the critic for the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, and it's in that capacity that I participate in this debate. My responsibility as critic is to hold the minister accountable. That's very difficult to do when the minister refuses to answer any questions.

One of the reasons we have this resolution before us, brought forward by the leader of the official opposition, John Tory, is to attempt in some way to bring to the floor of this Legislature and to allow people to observe a debate that has nothing at all to do with whether or not people from various parts of the world are welcomed in this province. We all agree with that. There isn't a member of this Legislature who does not commit to and embrace the fact that people from every corner of this world should have an equal opportunity to integrate into our communities, have the opportunity to be engaged as a citizen, have an equal opportunity for exercising their profession, their trade that they may have learned. And so the settlement services that the member from London-Fanshawe referred to, we are all supportive of.

I find it interesting that, when the member referred to the philosophy and the principles of the Liberal Party, he not once mentioned the word "accountability"—not once. And that is what this debate is all about. It's about

accountability. The questions that have been put to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration are: Why has he chosen as a minister to simply distribute funds to various groups without having an application process, without having some way of determining a ranking, a rating, a qualification for funds? And why has he not made that available to all groups of all various cultural backgrounds? I have many organizations within my riding that would have loved to have part of that \$200,000 that went to the Iranian Canadian Community Centre in Richmond Hill, but they were not given an opportunity. Why? Because apparently membership has its privileges, and that membership to which I'm referring is membership in the Liberal Party of Ontario. Isn't it interesting that the Iranian Canadian Community Centre in Richmond Hill has seven members out of seven directors who are all closely aligned with the Liberal Party of Ontario? Isn't it interesting that one of those individuals was in fact the individual who is the designated, blessed Liberal candidate in Richmond Hill, who was given a free passage to be the Liberal candidate by the campaign chair for the Liberal Party, who also happens to be Mr. Greg Sorbara, who happens to be the Minister of Finance of this province?

Here's the difference from American Express, which coined the term "Membership has its privileges": You see, with American Express, you have to pay your bill; with American Express, you actually get a detailed billing and there's accountability for your bill. This party, this Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, will have nothing to do with accountability when we come forward and simply ask him, through this resolution, to do three things: to table the information relating to the grants he's distributed, table the application forms that have been used, and, third, allow all of that information to be reviewed by this House. They say no. I say to you, what are they hiding? What are they hiding?

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Thank you, Speaker. I thought he was going to speak for a bit longer.

What the government has done is to give about \$30 million over a two-year period to approximately 31 organizations. If I recall correctly, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration hasn't been here longer than one year, which means that the previous—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: A year and a half? Well, if it is a year and a half, it means, then, that Mr. Colle supervised both of the two years of funding. That may be the case. What it means is that for two years, 31 organizations have been receiving money from the minister without any criteria whatsoever. What it means is that for two years the Premier's office, the Minister of Finance, all of cabinet and all the members of the Liberal Party have been following a process of their own making. The Premier has approved this process, quietly or not, for the last two years. Nowhere is there any evidence that the Premier

objected to this process, which suggests to me that he knew what was going on. That, in my view, is more reprehensible. My sense is that they left the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration out on his own, creating this process that doesn't have any application criteria.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Minister of Tourism, you should stand up and defend Mr. Colle, the Minister of Citizenship.

1630

The Premier has known that for two years money has been going out without any criteria, without any application process, so my attack is not on the minister so much as on the Premier's office. How could the Premier of this province allow \$30 million to go out without an application process? What does it say of the Premier? What does it say of the Premier's office? What does it say of the government when they can defend \$30 million going out to various communities of their choosing?

As the member from London-Fanshawe said earlier, "You don't have to come to the government. The government is coming looking for you." I'm sorry, member for London-Fanshawe, that's not the way it works. The way it works is that you, the government, establish the criteria, a written process, some process that becomes public and ubiquitous, which means that everyone knows about it, rather than the process you describe where the government comes looking for you. That's wrong. That is absolutely wrong.

The characterization of all the government members who speak to this, that the opposition parties are represented as politicians who are attacking multiculturalism or a multicultural group, is, in my view, not a very intelligent defence. It is not an intelligent defence whatsoever. In fact, it is a most distasteful defence. This is not an attack on multiculturalism, because I'm a strong defender of it. It's an attack on the government. It's an attack on all of you, from the Premier's office to the minister's office. The minister should have had in place a process that was clean, clear and transparent.

Remember, you Liberals got elected on the basis that you were going to be more—I didn't say it; you said it—accountable and that you were going to be more transparent. I didn't say it; you said it. You were going to be more accountable, more transparent. You have members of the rump here who are strong defenders of this. My friend from Oakville is a strong defender of accountability and transparency, except when it comes to exposing your own problem, and then it becomes a different issue. Then it becomes that the opposition parties are attacking those who so desperately want to integrate.

I suggest to you, member from Oakville and member from London-Fanshawe, that there are more than 31 organizations desperately wanting to integrate, desperately wanting funds to help them out. There are thousands of organizations that have been around for countless years, desperately looking to apply for money. Even those organizations that don't have the money or the staff to spend on an application process would happily be

looking for an application process to be able to apply for that money. You got it all wrong. Your weak, indefensible position that somehow you're just giving money to groups because you care about integration is simply weak, indefensible and not intelligent.

What you should do is acknowledge that you made a mistake. If you had done that early, you would not have had two weeks of questions on this matter. Minister Colle would have been attacked, but he would have acknowledged that it was a mistake and that he's quickly rectifying the problem. But defending it day in and day out, saying, "Oh, these groups that have approached us and we approached them that have been looking for money, that have been neglected for decades and decades by the other parties, and finally we gave some money"—that's your defence? That's pretty bad. It's pitiful.

How can the public, citizens, including taxpayers, have any faith in the government when you give out money willy-nilly to any group that you deem to be worthy? Because in making the argument that those to whom you gave are worthy, what you're saying is that those who didn't get it are not worthy, and you wouldn't be saying that, of course. You wouldn't want to be caught saying that, but that's your argument: "The organizations to whom we gave money are worthy," meaning, suggesting, that those that didn't get it are not worthy.

Mr. Ramal: We didn't say that.

Mr. Marchese: Of course you didn't say that, but you understand the argument, in the same way that we're saying we're not attacking multicultural groups. But you are quite deliberately suggesting that we are, member from London-Fanshawe. Nobody said that on this side, but you're quite willing to say, "We didn't say that." Of course you wouldn't say that those who didn't get it are not worthy; of course not. That's the argument you're making: that the ones to whom you funded through this fund are worthy.

You have undermined government. You have undermined the political role of what it is to be a member in this Legislative Assembly. By not having standards, you undermine us all. By not having criteria, you undermine us all. By not having an application process, you undermine us all. And you are, as a government, the leader. You set the standard. When the bar becomes so low, then what does it say to other organizations? How can you make other organizations accountable when you yourself have not made yourself accountable? How can you say you're going to scrutinize the municipal level, the elementary/secondary level, the post-secondary institutions that are the MUSH sector connected to you as government? How can you say you're going to monitor them, you're going to audit them, you're going to make sure that everything they do is transparent because you give them money, yet you yourselves do not make yourselves accountable and transparent. You understand? You put yourself in a jam.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: Some loud people on the other side.

You are putting yourself in a very, very difficult predicament. When we say that we should have an auditor review this, it's what you would be calling for if you were in opposition. It's what you did call for when you were in opposition. It's what you will call for when you get into opposition again. It's what you would be doing under normal circumstances, except, when you're in government, rather than immediately acknowledging, "Oops, we goofed and we goofed really, really badly," you retreat in the most terrible of defences; i.e., the opposition parties are attacking multicultural groups.

Thirty million dollars—understand, when people talk about waste, they say, "This isn't wasteful? We don't know. We don't have a clue because we have no prescribed application process to be able to review them." We're calling for an auditor to review this and the government refuses it, so we don't have a clue whether or not we're getting our money's worth. So when the public, both citizens and taxpayers, say, "Who knows what it is that governments do? Who knows where money goes when the government refuses to put in place a process that is clean and transparent?" you make yourselves vulnerable, but worse, you make us all vulnerable, and that's what I decry even more.

Your final defence is, "Ah, but we now have a registry." Okay. It took a while. You had it last year and you had no registry; you have it this year and all of a sudden, a week after questions, you have a registry. But of course you're going to have a registry; of course you're now going to have an application process online. God bless. Hopefully most of these people will have a computer and be able to go online and apply. Okay. But let's assume that they'll hear through the grapevine through the Liberal MPPs that they'll be able to apply. Maybe they'll apply through some other registered agency; who knows? The point is, it took two years. The point is, we needed to expose this. The point is, if it hadn't come out in the open we would have had a third year of a Liberal government doling out money on the basis of who it is they know or who it is they approached, on the basis of a Liberal MPP contact saying, "By the way, there's money here." Because the sad thing is, opposition members didn't know. Sadly, it didn't occur to the government, the cabinet or the other MPPs to say to the opposition members, "By the way, we've got a pot of money and we'd like to be able to help you too. Here's how you do it." We were not informed.

1640

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Yeah, like we knew.

Mr. Marchese: It is possible, Minister, that maybe some of you didn't know. It's quite possible. But how is it—I don't want to mention any names. If some of you didn't know, who knew? And if some of you or most of you didn't know, in spite of the fact that we hear that some did—just one minister is in the know? If that is the case, it speaks worse of the government. My sense is that many Liberals knew. My sense is that some cabinet

ministers would not have known because they might have missed a caucus meeting where that was told to them. But my sense is, having been in government, that things get discussed in caucuses and people know, basically, what governments do.

I suggest to you that the majority of you, 90% of you, knew that this fund was available. I could be wrong; it could be that only 70% of you knew. But if even 50% of you knew, 100% of the opposition parties had no clue. We did not have the benefit of the minister's advice. We did not have the benefit of the Premier's office saying, "Marchese, by the way, apply for some money. We can fit you in too." We didn't have the benefit of mon ami Greg Sorbara saying, "Marchese, apply. There's a couple of bucks here. Help out a couple of your communities." I didn't get that benefit.

Ms. Horwath: You didn't get that call?

Mr. Marchese: No call, no whispering behind closed doors—

Ms. Horwath: Nobody passed you a note?

Mr. Marchese: No little note saying, "Marchese—oh, by the way, Andrea, you could use some too, in your riding of Hamilton."

Ms. Horwath: Absolutely.

Mr. Marchese: None of that.

All I want to say to you is that if you had acknowledged early on that you got caught and that, "Good heavens, I didn't have a process; we're going to put one in immediately," my suggestion is that this might have died a week ago, a week and a half ago, possibly. I don't know. Don't quote me too much on this, because I don't know. But usually when you admit, acknowledge, that you may have committed a misdemeanour, an act of malfeasance, willingly or not, what you do is defang the enemy a little bit, disarm the enemy a little bit. Maybe a lot; it depends. I don't know; I can't speak for the others. But that's what, normally, acknowledgments do: They disarm the enemy.

But you didn't do that. You were quite happy, for two weeks, permitting communities out there on their own, and with some willing help from the Liberal members, to encourage the thought that maybe Conservatives and New Democrats are discriminatory against some groups, possibly. My sense is that some of you nurtured that feeling. My sense is that some of you encouraged some of the community groups to be outraged that New Democrats and Tories would even raise this as an issue. No process, and we became the guilty party? No standards, and we become the guilty party? No criteria, no application process, nothing open, and the opposition party becomes the problemo? No. Member from London—Fanshawe, we're not the problemo; you are. Your government, your Premier, is in the hot seat in this regard. Up until a couple of days ago, even mon ami Monsieur McGuinty, the Premier, was encouraging the thought that perhaps we might be racist in raising this issue.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot): No, he didn't say that.

Mr. Marchese: Maybe elliptically, by inference, he was suggesting that—

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: He took it back. And when asked the question, "Are you suggesting that the opposition parties are racist?" he then had to say no, which is the right answer. Ted, that was the right answer. The Premier was on safe ground to say, "No, the opposition parties are not discriminatory against any group that might have received money," because that's not what the issue is about. The issue is not multiculturalism; the issue is process. The issue is not which group got the money, but which group could not apply to get the money. Those are the questions.

And you, my Liberal friends, have to live with the consequence of getting beaten up, not just by the opposition parties but, I suggest to you, by many citizens of Ontario who simply decry what you have done. Ultimately, they will make you accountable if we can't.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this issue. I've been sitting here—I think we're now into our third week of talking about this issue—paying close attention to the questions that have been asked. Frankly, I'm perplexed, genuinely perplexed, as to why the opposition continues with this. We've had a lot of interesting things happen here. We brought down a budget, and nobody—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Matthews: Let me just read from the minister's statement that was made a full week ago. Minister Colle addressed this Legislature, and for those of you who perhaps weren't able to be here or weren't able to pay attention, I'd like to reread part of that statement. He said:

"While the purpose of this funding is admirable, the process applied can be improved. We acknowledge that the process can be improved, can be strengthened. To be clear, we are taking the time now to improve that process...."

"Officials from my ministry have created a distinct application process that is more clear, helpful and accessible to all communities. This improved process will identify community needs and work to address these needs. The new application will be available online by the end of the week...." And indeed it was. It is now on the ministry website.

So one week ago the minister stood up and thanked the opposition for raising the issue, for observing that the process could be strengthened. He has moved on that. He has strengthened the process. Yet we continue to hear from members opposite about this issue. I am not going to impute any motives to anyone, because I think that is dangerous, but I do wonder why grants to newcomer communities have had the attention of both opposition parties for the last—as I say, we're now into the third week. Both parties have continued to attack not only the minister and the government—and that's their job; they can do that—but they've attacked the very organizations

that are established to help integrate newcomers into Ontario. To call them fly-by-night organizations is simply unacceptable, and I want to register my disgust at a comment like that.

I'm happy that the member from London-Fanshawe recognized the research I have done into immigration, into immigrant settlement. There's much I would like to talk about, but on this occasion I'm going to talk about one rather alarming statistic: One in six children in Ontario lives in poverty, and one in two of newcomers. This is a statistic that is old, and after the Ontario child benefit comes into play, I hope that number will be smaller. One in six in the general population, one in two of newcomers. That statistic alone underlines the importance of investing in newcomers.

In Ontario for a long time we have thought that investing in our children through their education system was just something we did. We knew that a dollar spent to educate a child would pay dividends down the road. We need to switch our thinking and invest in newcomers the same way we invest in children. We know that we are going to rely increasingly on newcomers to be our labour force and to be our society. Making investments in newcomers is something the Liberal Party has recognized. The Liberal Party has moved forward on this. If in doing so we didn't have the process that we recognize we should have had, we're prepared to accept that. But we have already fixed it.

1650

This issue, as you can probably tell, is one that is close to my heart. As I say, I don't like to pretend I understand the motives of people opposite, but I can tell you that when a party puts their immigration platform in the crime section of their platform, that speaks volumes about their attitude towards newcomers.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I need to hear the speaker. Everybody is doing a great job this afternoon. Let's keep it up.

Member for London North Centre.

Ms. Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I'm just trying to get a time check in here. I don't want to steal—have I used up all my time? Yes, I have. I apologize. Thank you very much.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to speak out against the McGuinty government sponsorship scandal, the year-end slush fund. It appears to be set up to circulate taxpayers' money back to the McGuinty Liberals, as we heard described this afternoon by Mr. Tory.

In certain countries, often in banana republics, we see governments that do this kind of thing, governments that amount to little more than oligarchies. I'm referring to governments that are run by the few for the benefit of the few and the bill is paid for by the many. In my view, Dalton McGuinty has succeeded—well, he hasn't quite succeeded yet in turning Ontario into a banana republic, but he has established himself as the province's lead oligarch by actions such as this slush fund.

Just to recap, tax dollars have been shovelled out the door with little or no oversight, apparently, to prominent McGuinty supporters and donors. But it gets worse. The minister responsible, Minister Colle, refuses to answer questions or allow the provincial auditor to investigate the McGuinty slush fund. If there was nothing to hide, Dalton McGuinty would take the opportunity to clean up his scandal-tarnished image. Stonewalling by Mr. McGuinty continues to fuel a public perception that tax dollars are being shovelled out at Queen's Park only to find their way into the McGuinty-Sorbara re-election fund.

This is something that I quite honestly would have expected in a banana republic oligarchy, not in a parliamentary democracy as we have in Ontario. Dalton McGuinty just doesn't get it. Tax money does not belong to him. Tax money does not belong to his political party. It belongs to the people, the people who pay those taxes.

I'm very concerned. Welcome to Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, where this ruling regime of self-serving oligarchs seems bent on achieving Third World status. Enough is enough. Call in the provincial auditor.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I have to say I'm totally and unequivocally against this motion from Mr. John Tory, because Mr. Tory is here to put up barriers in front of Ontarians, to divide Ontarians. He is not somebody who is here to build partnerships, to build a province for strength and prosperity where everybody has an opportunity.

Minister Colle, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, has done more for the immigrant experience in this province than anybody I have seen in decades. The previous government did nothing for immigrants. They were not able to secure an agreement with the federal government to bring more monies for settlement services, for cultural services. Actually, in the Conservative Party's last campaign platform, which is a very political document, they put immigrants in the subject under crime. Immigration fell under crime for the Tories. That's where they come from. That's where they see immigrants.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member has fallen into the gutter and his hands are too mucky to get out.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. I'd ask you to consider your points of order before you bring them up.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member from Mississauga just said that Conservatives equate immigrants with criminals. I would ask that he withdraw those comments, which are inflammatory and quite wrong.

The Deputy Speaker: If the member chooses to, he may.

Member from Mississauga East.

Mr. Fonseca: I'll just say that what I did say was that they put the subject of immigration under the crime section in their platform.

Let's talk about not putting up barriers—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order, please.

Mr. Fonseca: I want to talk about taking down barriers. Let's look at some of the things that Minister Colle did: bringing forward Bill 124, which allowed for fairness of access to regulated professions. When we came into government, we had very few foreign-trained medical professionals, doctors. This is one example where they're being brought into our system, which we had much need of. Since coming into government, this party has brought forward—we are now graduating well over 200 foreign-trained professionals every year, giving access to hundreds of thousands of Ontarians to a family doctor.

I also see this motion by the Conservative Party and Mr. Tory as smoke and mirrors, trying to get away from talking about the budget—what's important to the people of Ontario. They don't want to talk about seniors. They don't want to talk about municipal property tax reform. They don't want to talk about an end to pooling in the 905. They don't want to talk about injured workers. They don't want to talk about the new Ontario child benefit. All they want to talk about is divisive politics. All they want to do is put up barriers in front of everybody. They do not want to talk about the fact that the \$920 million that Minister Colle was able to secure is doing so much good in my community, bringing settlement services into the community, allowing newcomers to have access to jobs that much more quickly—language programs. It is making a world of difference, and we can thank Minister Colle for that. He has also provided Global Experience Ontario, another program allowing for access and speedy job training and certification of our newcomers.

What's at the heart of all this is yet another negative outburst by the Tories. They have to resort to this because they have no positive policy. We don't hear anything: nothing about health care, nothing about education, nothing about the environment—nothing, nothing, nothing. So they have to find any single negative they can. They look for negatives in everything. Even when there's a positive thing—giving monies to many groups in need—they try to bring it to a negative. I have not heard a positive thing brought forward here by the Conservative Party. And when they do mention that we've done something positive, they may say it's not enough, but on the other hand, they'll talk about ripping dollars out of services. They want to take \$2.5 billion out of our health care services, much needed for immigrants when they come here. That's a safety net for newcomers. Taking money out of publicly funded education: that's also something—many of our new Canadians may not be able to afford private schools, so taking money out of that. All it is is about dividing Ontarians.

I am here to support Minister Colle, to support this government. I knock on doors. If you talk to the people of Ontario about the Ontario Liberal Party, they know that that is the party that is here helping immigrants with their experience of settlement, helping immigrants with

opportunities to be able to get them into meaningful work experiences, to be able to allow our province to prosper.

We see immigration diversity differently in the province of Ontario. We embrace it in this party. We embrace our newcomers. On that note, thank you.

1700

Ms. MacLeod: I am absolutely disgusted with the rhetoric that came out of the mouth of that member. I think, in order for this place to reach a level of decorum, he should withdraw those heinous remarks. We talked—

The Deputy Speaker: You know as well that in the standing orders you can't attack other members. We've been doing great this afternoon. Keep the debate at that level.

Ms. MacLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but it is disappointing that this debate has been reduced to the lowest common denominator when you would attack members of the opposition from both political parties who call for greater accountability and greater transparency for public dollars by calling us racists. I think that's just awful.

I'm so pleased to be able to debate this motion today, put forward by the leader of the official opposition—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): The next Premier.

Ms. MacLeod: Yes: the next Premier of Ontario, ladies and gentlemen. But I'm very pleased to be able to stand here today to ask for some clarification in this entire dirty process and add some accountability.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration should allow for the Auditor General to go in and audit these grants. He should table the list of the hundreds of groups he has talked about and he should table the written criteria of the grants, even if it is on the back of a paper napkin, somewhat like Jean Chrétien did with the hotel Grand-Mère. We all remember that. Finally, I support the idea of the leader of the official opposition that all of the correspondence pertaining to this program be tabled in this Legislature, and I'm going to tell you why.

On a few occasions since I've been elected in the last year, various ministers have come forward with various community partnership grants. I'm looking at the victims' justice fund. Stakeholders in my community were notified that there was a grant process. I was notified that there was a grant process, so I was able to communicate to my constituents to tell them that they were eligible for a grant.

Similarly, the Minister of Health Promotion—my next-door neighbour—had an application for communities in action fund grants. I was able to similarly let my constituents know that there was a process in place for them to apply and get money that their community groups so desperately need. But in absence of this, I see that only four groups from Ottawa were even given any money. What's sad about it is that there are so many good groups in Nepean—Carleton that have been left out of this process, that have been ignored. I'm thinking of the south Nepean Muslim association. I'm thinking about the south Nepean Tamil community. I'm thinking about

the south Nepean Jewish community, who, when we were trying to work as a community to come up with the south Ottawa autism centre, the three groups that came across my constituency office—one, two and three, right through the door—were the Tamil community, the south Nepean Muslim community and the south Nepean Jewish community. They're great community partners who were forgotten in this process. For that, I think there needs to be some public accountability. You should be ashamed of yourselves over there for standing up and just listening to the government spin. You should stand up. Have some accountability yourselves. Believe in yourselves for once.

This is just shameful. We're talking about public accountability. It's public money and it should be going to the public good, yet, time and time again with respect to this process, we find that the beneficiaries have Liberal membership cards. My colleague the critic for citizenship and immigration talked about, "Membership has its privileges." Why should you be privy to receiving a provincial government grant just because you hold a Liberal membership card, like Maria Minna or some other groups that have been mentioned in this Legislature who are affiliated with other members or who are candidates for the Liberal Party? Just because the people in south Nepean don't hold a Liberal membership card does not mean they should be excluded.

On that note, I'd like to cede the floor to other people to take part in debate. Hopefully, members opposite will stand in their place and join our call for today's motion.

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West—Mississauga): Thank you very much for giving me a chance to speak against the motion brought forward by the official opposition questioning our government's contribution to certain cultural groups. I'm deeply disheartened and disappointed today to respond to this motion and the allegations put forward by the Tory-Harris-Eves Conservatives. Attacking cultural groups such as those in the South Asian community who do not have powerful boards or lobbying firms to answer back has caused insurmountable damage to their reputations.

Our community and many others who apply for government funding ask for this funding to help newcomers to Ontario feel at home and welcome. It's important to speak to this House and explain why this is a very serious matter to the people of Ontario. These communities represent the backbone of this province, and in one shot, the official opposition and the third party have alienated and disrespected many of our cultural groups who, under previous governments, were simply ignored. Our responsibility is to invest in projects that support diversity and heritage, community involvement and volunteer participation, and to celebrate Ontario's cultural makeup.

We're very proud of our investments in all of these community organizations, regardless of their political stripe. Many of these newcomers embrace the freedom and democracy in Canada by actively seeking to be a part of the political process. And so, newcomers have every right to be active with the NDP, the Conservatives or the Liberals.

Our investments are made to hard-working community organizations that provide much-needed services to their communities. Our government has committed to strengthen our one-time capital grant program, which is available due to the strong fiscal management of our economy. We've put in place an online application process, a process which is clear, more helpful and more accessible.

Our government, since its inception into office, has done everything possible to reach out to the many diverse communities in Ontario. We see diversity in Ontario in a very different way. Some newcomers have difficulty adjusting, and it's our job to help these communities. Our government has stepped up to the plate in answering these needs. We're making communities stronger, and that's why we're investing in language training, counselling services, seniors' centres, museums and the like.

It's very unfortunate and sad that the opposition has chosen to characterize and isolate these investments to these communities. What's at the heart of this is that we have yet another negative outburst on the part of the opposition. Resorting to these tactics clearly outlines that the opposition does not have any positive proposals to put to the people of Ontario.

We've funded the Royal Ontario Museum, the National Ballet of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario. Why hasn't the opposition asked about that? I wonder, when it comes to small grants of \$50,000 to the food bank or the seniors' centre in my riding or the gurdwaras—suddenly the opposition is up in arms. Our government has supported many cultural organizations in Ontario. We support smaller community-based organizations as well. We feel a strong sense of responsibility to support our cultural communities to ensure that new Canadians who arrive here have every possible opportunity to become integrated socially and economically. That's fundamentally what it's all about.

I'm going to pass the rest of my time to the Minister for Small Business. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise in debate today. It's a sad and unfortunate circumstance that we hear members of the Ontario Liberal Party seeking the lowest refuge of debate in this Legislature by painting any legitimate questions about the process of the slush fund and the political connectedness of Ontario Liberals and how this has benefited Ontario Liberals as opposed to the general benefit of well-deserving cultural groups—absolutely shameful. They have tried to paint any questions so as to say that somehow opposition parties oppose these grants.

What we oppose are the connections to the Ontario Liberal Party, where it's not what you do, it's who you knew. If you were good buddies with the campaign chair, Mr. Sorbara, the finance minister, if you were good buddies with Mike Colle, the citizenship minister, you got your grant. Apparently, someone in the Ontario Liberal Party—probably the minister, maybe the campaign chair—told Liberal MPPs, according to the papers and according to their own member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, that there was a slush fund

available. That fund was not made known generally. It was not made known to members of the opposition or of the third party. But apparently in caucus or somewhere they said, "Get your slush fund applications in now." When you see that one of the questionable recipients is a Liberal candidate in the next election and a close associate of the Liberal campaign chair, no wonder we ask questions. It's a good thing we do.

1710

Let me tell you about, for example, the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre and Casa El Norte in Fort Erie: organizations that work hard day in, day out, weekends and holidays, trying to help immigrants and refugees in the province of Ontario get settled. They do damn good work. They work hard. The member from Ottawa—Orléans thinks this is very funny, but did they even know about the grants? They're not on this list. They're not on this list because they didn't have a Liberal Party candidate as their chair or the president of their association. They didn't have the spouse of a Liberal MPP running their organization. They didn't make donations, I guess, to the proper Liberal war chests. Therefore, Casa El Norte and the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre, working now as the Peace Bridge Newcomer Centre, didn't get dime one, because under Dalton McGuinty's slush fund, it's your Liberal Party connections that count, not what you do for immigrants, newcomers and refugees in the province of Ontario.

Have these members here, like the member from Mississauga who makes these accusations, go down to Fort Erie or to the Italian Canadian Cultural Centre in Port Colborne or in Fort Erie that do outstanding work in their cultural communities and in the community as a whole and that have tired buildings that have been there for 40 or 50 years. They'd love to have some funding for wheelchair access, for example. They'd love to have some funding to offer more programs to the community at large. They didn't get dime one. They're not on these lists, because they don't have a Liberal candidate on their board of directors. They don't have a spouse of a Liberal MPP running the show. They weren't even notified that these grants were available. So don't give me this argument if you're an Ontario Liberal, please. It's shameful that they resort to the type of arguments that they have in this Legislature when they're outstanding organizations.

This weekend I was at the Slovenian hall, Bled Hall in Beamsville, celebrating 50 years of contributions of the Slovenian community in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I was there.

Mr. Hudak: Mr. Kormos as well had brought greetings to the Slovenian hall, because he knows as well as I do that when they escaped Slovenia, when they crossed that border, they risked life and limb. They went across the border of Austria and came to Canada: not a dime in their pockets. They worked hard and played by the rules. They raised their families; their children and grandchildren were tremendously successful. You know what, I say to my colleague from Welland. They thanked Canada. It should be Canada that is thanking them for the

contributions that they made. Bled Hall: 40 years or so old.

Mr. Kormos: Exactly.

Mr. Hudak: "Exactly," the member for Welland—Thorold says. They didn't have access to a dime of this fund. They could have used that investment. And you know what? They'd be satisfied if there was a fair process. If they had put their application forward fair and square and the projects were reviewed, rated somehow, and they didn't qualify, they would understand, because all communities in this province of Ontario, wherever they came from—my own family contributed to the Slovak Hall in Sarnia—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: They'd understand the principle of fairness and would support that if there was one rule for everybody, not a special rule for the Liberal Party and another rule for everyone else.

Finally, my last comment: Boy, oh boy, this reminds me of Guité, Galliano, Chrétien and the gang.

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: You remember, right? We all remember that as soon as the question was raised about a sponsorship scandal, what did the Liberals say at that point in time? "You're anti-Quebec," or "You're anti-Canada." They used the same type of despicable attack methods that the Ontario Liberals are using today, but what did we find at the end of the day? That it was helping—

Mr. Yakabuski: Guilty.

Mr. Hudak: Guité was guilty. Money was being triggered to the federal Liberal Party. We've seen these types of Liberal smokescreens before.

I know the Slovenian hall, the Italo hall, the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre, to name just three examples—Club Rheingold in Port Colborne, for the German community—want to know and they want the auditor to come in and make sure that we get to the bottom of this and have a fair process moving ahead.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

This debate once again reminds me of how out of touch the Conservative Party is with the priorities, the values and the important issues that face our province. I've received a grand total of one call on this issue, and I received a grand total of one call on the lottery issue that they've spent 120, 130 questions on.

Last night I was at the Ottawa Muslim Women's Organization annual dinner at St. Elijah's hall. They were very appreciative of the approach that our government has taken to new Canadians, to multiculturalism and the integration of some of these groups that have been starved for funding and for programming dollars to help those less fortunate in our community. But the other thing that came up time and time again, aside from one woman I was sitting next to who was very complimentary about Minister Colle and the work that he's done in this new portfolio—time and time again I was asked about the priorities of the people of my community in Ottawa: health care, education, economic prosperity. They were very pleased that my colleague Madeleine

Meilleur and I and Phil McNeely were announcing a \$25-million contribution to help with wait times in the Ottawa area, including \$4.3 million to the Queensway Carleton Hospital. They were also very impressed with the announcement I also had the honour of making on behalf of Premier McGuinty in his capacity as Minister of Research and Innovation in the riding of Nepean—Carleton: a \$4-million contribution to Plasco and its very innovative technology program that will eliminate 85 tonnes of garbage a day.

They were also concerned that the Tory caucus from eastern Ontario seems to be continuously turning its back on the needs of our community. Why, for instance, are the members from Lanark and Nepean—Carleton not supporting the expansion of the regional cancer centre to Queensway Carleton Hospital, for instance?

We've recognized that transparency is needed in this and all programs. That's why I'm proud that we brought in the fiscal transparency act, proud that we've allowed the Auditor General to audit more services and agencies of the government and expanded the freedom-of-information act to colleges, universities and hospitals. We have instituted, under the leadership of Minister Colle, a process to ensure that there's a proper capital grant application form so that there is the sense of fairness to all individuals involved.

I'm very proud of what we're trying to do. It's really quite unfortunate that for some of these good volunteer groups, their names are being thrown around in the mud by the opposition. Let's support these groups. Let's congratulate them and applaud them for the good work that they're doing and how they stretch a dollar and ensure that the new Canadians that we hope to serve and hope to integrate in our community are properly served by our government and by all members of this Legislature.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join this debate today on our leader's opposition day motion that calls for accountability, which is exactly what Premier McGuinty talked about in his throne speech: He called for transparency and accountability. Well, how hollow those words really are, because you know what the old saying is: "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." Obviously, Premier McGuinty had no interest in accountability when he uttered those words from his throne speech here some three years and six or seven months ago.

I guess the Premier is the one who set the standards. He's the one who sets the level at which the government will operate. But he has lowered those standards to a new level, to a new low level, because now they have decided that, "Where there's politics involved and where it's advantageous to the Liberal Party, we can dispense with any kind of process that normal people in any kind of environment"—whether you're in business, whether you're in charitable organizations, whether you're in clubs, everybody keeps the books; everybody keeps a set of books. They keep minutes of meetings and all of this kind of stuff so that if there are questions, those questions can be answered. Well, the minister can't answer any

questions—not that he would if he could, because he has no intention of answering them, and that's been clearly displayed over the last few weeks. He couldn't answer them because he has no records to go by. He simply shovelled the money out the door, with the help of the finance minister, the Liberal campaign chair, to whatever group could produce the greatest number of Liberal connections. So it was a kind of lottery from that perspective, to bring the minister responsible for lotteries into it again.

1720

So here we are spending this kind of time in the House, debating this kind of issue, because the government refuses to be accountable. The government would rather stand up and accuse those people who believe that governments should be able to justify money being spent—they would rather stand up and imply that the questions are motivated by race. That is what's disgusting about this whole thing.

Then we find out, courtesy of the member for Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh, that—

Interjection: Stool pigeon.

Mr. Yakabuski: Well, who knew about this slush fund? I didn't know about it, none of my colleagues knew about it, none of my friends in the third party knew about it, but the member for Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh knew about it because the minister or somebody walked into the caucus room and said, "Hey, folks, we've got some money available. We're not telling anybody about it. We're not going to have a process. We're not going to have applications. There will be no accountability. There will be no follow-up. Any suggestions where we can put it? We need to shovel it out the door by the end of the year." That's quite a process here in the Legislature of Ontario. So here we have it all over again. The Premier defends that kind of conduct from a minister.

Let's go back to when the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship was the Minister of Transportation and he was found guilty by the Integrity Commissioner of egregious wrongs—

Mr. Hudak: Reckless and egregious behaviour.

Mr. Yakabuski: —reckless behaviour with regard to the Members' Integrity Act. Nothing happened—the first minister in the history of this province to find himself in that position. So then we have the minister responsible for lotteries and Lottogate. When is this government going to wake up and smell the coffee? The people want accountability. Tell the people what you're doing with their money.

This is starting to smell like the sponsorship scandal in Ottawa. This is starting to smell like the sponsorship scandal that brought down the Liberal government in Ottawa. If these fellows across the way don't soon get their act together, they could fall victim to the same thing, because the people will not put up with that kind of arrogance in Ontario in the 21st century. They will not put up with that. If you are going to spend the people's money, then justify what you're doing.

Let's contrast this with the Ontario Trillium system, where those people have to go through a rigorous application process, scrupulous and rigorous; reams of paper. Then that has to go before a review team and they still may find your application wanting because there are so many applications for that money. So you still may not get the money. And if you're even lucky enough to get the money, then there's a follow-up process. So a few months later you've got to answer all the questions to actually prove that you did with the money what you said you were going to do with the money when you made your application for that grant. What's wrong with that kind of accountability? That's a great thing, the Trillium Foundation that the Conservative government brought in. That was wonderful. Why don't we operate all government agencies under that kind of system so that the people can be satisfied that their hard-earned dollars that are being spent are being accounted for in a sensible and reasonable fashion so that people can be confident that the government isn't corrupt?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I also want to talk about this motion. Let me tell you, I had the opportunity to work very closely with Minister Colle. He has been out in the communities, meeting with the multicultural groups, and has identified needs and tried to meet those needs on a very proactive basis.

The member for Trinity-Spadina and the member for Nepean-Carleton talked about undermining the process and also talked about the lowest common denominator. Let me just tell you who is undermining what, and how this is the lowest common denominator. What is undermined here is the credibility of some great organizations. The Leader of the Opposition had the guts to stand up and actually undermine the credibility of two Sikh organizations last week. And not only that; he didn't even get his facts right. He was talking about the Ontario Khalsa Darbar last week, an organization well respected in our community. Let me tell you, that is the same organization he has visited several times. He also talked about the Shromani Sikh Sangat. I was in the gurdwara at the same time that the Leader of the Opposition was in the gurdwara and he even got a plant from that organization. Then he had the guts to stand up in here and actually hurt their credibility. On the one hand, when he goes out, he talks about how he values these organizations, but when he comes into the House, he basically destroys their credibility. That is the standard of the party on the other side and that's why they really hate what we have done and how we have helped these communities.

Mr. Yakabuski: At least when John Tory is wrong, he's man enough to apologize.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Man enough to apologize? First make the mistake. Then—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. You speak through the Speaker, you don't heckle, and we'll get along just fine.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me just say this: He criticised the Ontario Khalsa Darbar here, that they were in a

dispute in the courts. Then, yesterday he went to the same organization and spoke at the same place. How could he do that? This is what is called a double standard. That's why they have no respect in the organization. That's why they should apologize first before they carry on any debate in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm honoured to be here this afternoon supporting our leader, John Tory, the next Premier of Ontario, in his opposition day motion. You're handing it to us on a platter. Welcome to Adscam 2. That's what we've got here. Who will ever forget old man Chrétien holding that golf ball, looking funny and making fun of Gomery?

The Deputy Speaker: The level of debate in this place is usually judged by how few times the Speaker has to intervene. I think the language is just—if you want to refer to someone, you should refer to them by their elected position, I think.

Mr. Dunlop: Who will ever forget the former Prime Minister of Canada making fun of Gomery with that golf ball? He was so corrupt and crooked, he didn't even realize how bad it was. We got Guité and we got Galliano—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Perth-Middlesex, come to order. All I'm asking is that you use parliamentary language. It doesn't matter who you're speaking about or where they are. Just use parliamentary language, please.

Mr. Dunlop: As you know, Mr. Speaker, people spent time in jail over that. I don't know how you say that in parliamentary language, but the fact of the matter is, welcome to Adscam 2.

Last year I had the opportunity of bringing down members of the Royal Canadian Legion, some veterans who had served this country. They were from the Penetanguishene Legion and the Midland Legion. Both of those Legions had put in applications numerous times for the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and they did it with integrity. They took a lot of time to fill out those applications and they got turned down. These are people from a francophone community in my community. They are people who have served their country. Their presence in World War II is exactly the reason why we have the kind of democracy we've got today. And what do we get out of this group over here? They're trying to brand Conservative members and New Democratic members as racists, as though we're bigots, because we expect transparency in our system. Isn't that what it's about? We expect transparency. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration actually referred one night to the Albany Club; that Conservatives would not accept people into the Albany Club because we were racist. I'm going to tell you, I had a fundraiser there last week, April 25, at the Albany Club. I had a joint fundraiser, and it was for the riding of Brampton West. Our candidate is a gentleman by the name of Mark Beckles. He's an African Canadian and he is the head of the Nelson Mandela Children's

Fund of Canada. You know what? He's going to win the riding of Brampton West. I had francophones there; I had East Indians there; I had native Canadian Indians there. We're not bigots; we're not racist. All we want is transparency in this House, transparency in this system. What we've seen happen with the Liberal Minister of Finance, the Liberal campaign chair handing out sums of money at the end of the season—it's unconscionable. It's absolutely pathetic. And the Liberal members of the House seem to think it's okay. Why would they think something like that was okay when other people didn't get an opportunity to spend their tax dollars?

1730

I could go on all day about this. I'd really like to go back to the Gomery commission, but that seems to really, really hit a sore point in this House. But the reality is that there are a many, many organizations, from the top end of Ontario—northern Ontario—eastern Ontario, down through community organizations all across our province that would love to have an opportunity to tap into some of that kind of funding. They don't mind filling out application forms. It isn't about buying a Liberal membership or being a good buddy of the man who has increased spending by \$23 billion in the four years he's been here. No wonder they have a slush fund. How much money has been wasted? How much money has been wasted in this House?

Anyhow, I will be in full support of the motion of our leader, the next Premier of Ontario. I can tell you right now that I hope all members of this House, if they have any integrity, would believe and support this opposition day motion today.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Jai swaminarayan, vanakkum, sat sri akal, salam alaikum, shalom aleichem, namaskar, and bon soir.

We are today in a global village. It's a phrase found in the media, a phrase found in print, on the Web, on the radio and on television. But it's more than that. It captures the hearts and minds and souls of large portions, perhaps all, of Ontarians. With these particular funding opportunities, these investments in people as part of a continuous program of support for integration for all Ontarians, particularly multicultural Canadians, this is an initiative that is worthy of the support not only of all members of this House, but of all the bureaucrats who are listening to us and indeed all members of the province of Ontario.

We all rise together. It's trite, it's a triviality, it's a cliché, but funding that is brought forward to different institutions, whether it's for the disabled, for the celebration of heritage, of culture, of language, of affirmation of values, be they family values or educational values, whatever the case may be, is surely something that the government of Ontario should be involved in, should show leadership towards and should definitely support and fund.

I appreciate the extraordinary gesture from the MPP for Simcoe North of holding a reception for a number of multicultural or diverse Canadians in the hallowed halls

of the Albany Club, but with respect, sir, receptions and opportunities of food tasting are passé. Ontarians want more. Ontarians of all different stripes want more. This is an experiment, and the world is looking towards Canada.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Qaadri: Thank you. Toronto, and particularly Ontario, in terms of its multicultural tolerance and harmony and celebration, is an experiment, an example to the world. Whether the Honourable Mike Colle, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, is spearheading this particular initiative that is under discussion now or whether it's negotiating with the federal government for a more equitable distribution for newcomer settlement or the more recent passage of Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, this is simply another hallmark, a testimony not only to the Liberal vision, the McGuinty vision, but now, with the gentleman who bears the hallowed name of Trudeau coming on to the federal scene, the vision of Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

The MPP for Erie–Lincoln, who I understand from what we're hearing is the future leader of the Conservative Party, post-October, very rightly brings up the example of the Slovene community, and very rightly brings forward examples of worthy groups that require funding and that would require support. This is part of the global village and the mandate that we have as the government and stewards of Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Over the past couple of weeks of these debates on accountability, I've heard from individuals and groups and they're wondering why they weren't invited to participate in this process. I think one of the most long-standing is the Fiesta Week celebration in Oshawa, and indeed Durham region, which has been going on for years, and other groups like women's shelters as well as other groups that I feel were neglected in this process.

Our leader, John Tory, has brought forward this opposition day motion to bring some kind of structure around the whole debate about accountability. In fact, he is talking about the Liberal year-end slush fund and he's asking three things, quite simply: the list of hundreds of groups that were notified or not notified, the written criteria used by Minister Colle as well as the correspondence that may have ensued as part of that process, what we would like to think would be an open process similar to what was used by the Trillium Foundation when dealing with hard-earned taxpayers' money.

I think one of the articles that I read just recently about this was from the Kitchener Record. The article, published just this morning, I think summarizes it: "Let's be clear about what is acceptable. Multicultural groups are entitled to receive grants." Our leader, John Tory, would agree and has said that. "Liberal Party supporters are also allowed to receive grants. To be even clearer, it can also be said that Liberal Party supporters who belong to multicultural groups are entitled to receive grants."

This whole debate is about this question. The article goes on, "The question that does arise, however, is whether the grants that the government issued were given out properly. That's a harder question. What is known is that a \$250,000 grant to the Bengali Cultural Society was criticized by" another group. The argument here that our leader, Mr. Tory, the Leader of the Opposition, is raising is not who, but how that money is given out.

People have made references to the federal government scandal that Justice Gomery ruled on. There have been citations and there seems to be a lot of suggestion of entitlement. Some members today have said that membership has its privilege. But what is really important here is that there is an accountability mechanism. I think it's only fair. This opposition day motion is to put it before the people of Ontario—before more money, more slush funds and other such manoeuvres as was the case in Ottawa. I think it's only fair that the committee should receive the input that has been requested in this opposition day motion.

I go back to my riding and what I'm hearing, and it's cynicism that arises. On the one hand, we're debating democratic renewal and accountability and transparency, and we see these sorts of suggestions. I would say that a good review would be an appropriate response by any strong leadership.

Quite frankly, I'm disappointed that our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, hasn't asked for the minister to step aside and have a full and open review. If this fails that test, if the minister has made a lapse, then the argument has been made. But if what they're saying in defence is true, then the responsibility of the opposition is indeed to raise the questions. When people stoop to low measures of accusations about one another, it serves no purpose to advance the cause of public accountability, which is what our opposition day motion is all about.

1740

The Kitchener-Waterloo Record says it; my constituents say it. Why should a Liberal member, like the member from Charlottenburgh—he was actually solicited, whether or not he had some media organization. I would say to you that every member on every side, in every party, has organizations that are struggling to allow new Canadians and others to assimilate into our wonderful economy in Ontario.

What I'm disappointed in is this: We're lacking leadership on the other side on this issue. The media and our leader, John Tory, are trying to get to the truth, trying to get to the substantial facts. What are we getting? We're getting stonewalled, a failure to work co-operatively with committees. Quite frankly, I think the cynicism that's in Ontario today is a direct result of no accountability on Lottogate, no accountability by the minister of enterprise today, and no accountability by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I'm going to take part in this debate to talk about partisanship issues that came up over and over again. I'm just going to quote some stuff that I have here. This is an e-mail from the

Conservative candidate in my riding, Ms. Galt. By the way, she's the wife of a former member under the Harris-Eves government. This is an e-mail that went out this week. It's addressed to "Fellow Conservatives," so nobody else in my riding matters, just fellow Conservatives.

"The Ontario Liberal government is contemplating passing a law so everyone who gets water from a private well will have to install a water meter on their system." We know that is not true, but we know that's what Mr. Hillier is saying. And by the way, their picture is together on their website. Following that, she's circulating a petition, and I'll read it:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's secret agenda to require the installation of meters on all water wells in the province of Ontario was recently revealed"—

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member for Northumberland that we're speaking to a resolution that doesn't, I don't think, include some of the subject matter you're talking about.

Mr. Rinaldi: It's referring to a partnership, about not telling the exact—but anyways, she points to—

Mr. Yakabuski: I know you're worried.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I don't know how many times I've warned you today. Just settle down. We're getting near the end.

The member for Northumberland.

Mr. Rinaldi: She points to this information from the chief medical officer of health from Durham. I spoke to Dr. Kyle this morning; he totally denied it. There's no truth, so they're the ones—talking about partisanship and spreading rumours.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm just delighted to be here. I want to talk about a project in my riding that I'm very proud of, that many members are proud of on our side of the House and proud of on the other side of the House: the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. Someone asked, the day we made the announcement, "How did you get the money?" What did Minister Sorbara say to the press? "Sorbara told the crowd that the funding came about partially because the [Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame] representatives spent a day at Queen's Park." Now, who organized that? I, the member for Perth-Middlesex, organized that. And who else was there? I had two co-chairmen. One of the co-chairmen was the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. And who was the other member? Well, it was the member from Trinity-Spadina. But now, all of a sudden, this is a controversial decision.

Minister Sorbara also said that "your MPP"—that would be me—"made clear and valid arguments as to why this is good for baseball and the community."

I'll tell you what the opposition are against. They're against this government investing some half a million dollars to make sure that the new dormitory for disadvantaged youth and the new museum are completely accessible to everyone in this province. On this side of the House, we believe that all members of society should

be able to go to a national shrine, that all should be able to go to this wonderful new museum and dormitory.

At that Baseball Hall of Fame in St. Marys we have the Kids on Deck program. The Kids on Deck program helps children from across Ontario who are underprivileged, who come from a multiplicity of backgrounds and may not know anything about baseball. The harshest critic has been the member for Beaches—East York, but I would like him to go to the Rotary Club of Beaches because the Rotary Club of Beaches in his riding donates money to the Kids on Deck program to send them to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in my riding. I was just wondering whether or not the member for Beaches will be so welcome in the Rotary Club of Beaches from now on, since he has told them that somehow this money should not be spent in my riding.

I want to quote a friend of mine, a constituent and someone who is not of the same political stripe as I, one Don McDougall whom I know many members of the Regressive Convertible Party know quite well. What did he say on the day that we announced the funding? He said, "This has been a long time coming and we couldn't be happier than to see the province acknowledge the validity of the hall's business plan by this generous donation."

I know that the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame provided a business plan to the ministry about this thick, but the reason we gave them the money is because we believed in them. The reason we gave them the money is because we have a minister of the crown, the Honourable Mike Colle, who believes that if he goes out to the community, if he talks to his colleagues, that he's open and accessible—and all of a sudden the members opposite believe that somehow they don't have a job on behalf of their constituents to talk to ministers of the crown who actually write the cheques. So I know that in the community of St. Mary's they are happy that our government believes in our vision, that the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, the dormitory for children and the new national team should be handicap-accessible to all. I know I and my colleagues are proud of that investment.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Tory has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1747 to 1757.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	Yakubski, John
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 26; the nays are 46.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The business of the day being dealt with and it being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned and will convene at 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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No. 165B



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Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 30 April 2007

Lundi 30 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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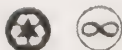
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL SAFETY), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (DISCIPLINE PROGRESSIVE ET SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 26, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety / Projet de loi 212, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne le comportement, la discipline et la sécurité.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): It's my understanding that on the last occasion the speaker from Toronto-Danforth had finished, and I call for further debate.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I'm pleased to have this opportunity tonight to speak on Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety. It couldn't really come at a better time, second reading debate, in that this is Education Week, although, as a retired educator, I know that every week was education week. But this is the week that we set aside to recognize the great work that's being done in our schools across the province by educators and by the students. As a retired educator, I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak.

Certainly across this province, schools and school boards are understanding and seeing the great work done by our esteemed education minister, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, and my colleague the member from—I should have looked at that before—Guelph-Wellington, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. She has led the safe schools action team, and she reported to this House in the first part of the second reading debate the major recommendations of their report, entitled Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action. She has reported that boards offer access to alternative programming for students who have been expelled or who are serving long-term suspensions.

She has reported that mitigating circumstances are to be considered before any student is expelled or suspended, and she has reported that boards use progressive discipline as a matter of standard practice. So the member from Guelph-Wellington has led the charge on this, and I commend her for that. I see she's walking into the House right now. I know that the minister she serves under has certainly entrusted in her a great opportunity of getting out around the province and understanding and hearing about discipline and the like.

We know and I know that safe schools are a prerequisite for student achievement. I am proud to say that in 2007-08, in order to make Ontario's schools safer, we will invest \$31 million.

We, as legislators, have heard about the need for safe schools and the safe schools strategy in debate in this House, and this bill builds on that strategy by proposing legislative amendments to the safe schools provision of the Education Act that would more effectively combine discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education. This legislation will continue to make student safety a top priority while ensuring that there are strong consequences for inappropriate behaviour.

One of the pillars of this legislation is the greater emphasis on addressing a student's inappropriate behaviour with appropriate interventions. Also, individualization is the emphasis, that one size in discipline does not fit all. Every pupil and every staff member has the right to feel safe and to be safe in school and on school grounds. Every parent must also feel that sense of security when their children leave for school in the morning.

I would like to comment, as I alluded to earlier, about the safe schools action team for a moment. As I said, this work was led by my colleague from Guelph-Wellington. This team talked to those most affected and who were most knowledgeable about safe schools, and hundreds of people from all walks of life across this province stepped forward during broad consultations. What were found and reported on were the serious discrepancies in consistency and fairness in the application of the safe schools provisions of the Education Act.

1850

I believe the minister pointed out very well, when she led off the second reading debate, an area of concern when she reported that in 2000-01, the number of expulsions across the province was 106, yet by 2004-05, the number had jumped to 1,888. As she said, and I quote, "Clearly there was something going on with this legis-

lation that had been brought in by the previous government that was not just, that was problematic.”

Certainly there are problems, and there are opportunities and the need for change. In fact, expulsions with no programs available for formal academic or social supports are not effective expulsions. An Education Act that is ineffective in raising the issue of bullying to the fore or that is ineffective in reducing bullying in schools is not an effective act. Bullied students are not being properly protected, with many losing self-confidence and watching grades drop as a result of hurt, insults and bullying.

As a government, we know that effective discipline with opportunities is what is required in schools across the province. Strong consequences for inappropriate behaviour are essential, but a program to allow students to earn their way back into the classroom is essential too.

I commented about bullying. The amendments that are being brought forth by this legislation would add bullying as an infraction for which a suspension must be considered. We recognize the seriousness of bullying, and parents and teachers across this province also recognize the seriousness of bullying.

I would like to recognize at this time the great work by a retired teacher in my riding. Her name is Mary Lynn Alguire, and she's doing a lot of work with the Upper Canada District School Board. During her career, she was a leader in classroom recognition of and intervention in bullying. She led many, many workshops for students, parents and teachers across my riding, and certainly she has been around this province too. Today, in retirement, she continues to offer her knowledge and expertise to this school board, the Upper Canada District School Board. As a teacher, I was proud to work alongside Mary Lynn, and now, as a legislator, I am proud to recognize her work around the issue of bullying in the classroom for pupils, parents and teachers both in my constituency and across the province of Ontario.

Rather than being in the malls and streets, students must have programs available to them in order to facilitate their return to the classroom. As you read through this legislation, you will see that an amendment to it would replace mandatory suspensions and expulsions for students with the requirement that principals and school boards consider and respond to all infractions that occur in the most appropriate way. What is proposed is a progressive discipline approach to choose the appropriate punishment in each case of inappropriate behaviour. There's certainly a range of punishments, from in-school detentions to referrals for consultation or transfer, before using suspensions or expulsions. As I said, there must be strong consequences for inappropriate behaviour, but there must also be effective discipline with opportunities.

As well, the proposed legislative amendments will clarify decision-making authority around suspensions for those so involved in the decision-making, those being the principals and the school boards.

We know that under the current legislation, teachers have the authority to suspend students. Not once in my 32 and a half years in the teaching profession did I

suspend a student, nor was I involved in the suspension of a student. Teachers rarely exercise the duty to suspend. Principals accept that responsibility. Teachers' federations have requested that a teacher's duty to suspend be removed from the act, and this legislation gives principals the authority to suspend and the boards the authority to expel. Principals are obligated, as in the past, to take into account the safety of students and staff.

There are certainly other improvements to the act. We're providing boards with \$20 million for supports to address inappropriate behaviour, including programs for all expelled students and students serving long-term suspensions. There's building capacity in school boards to address inappropriate student behaviour, providing training for principals and vice-principals. This bill offers a wide range of opportunities, opportunities for students who may from time to time not show appropriate behaviour in school and who do need the discipline required, but it also gives an opportunity—an opportunity of hope—that there is hope for the student to be integrated back into the classroom and to have the appropriate supports for that.

As I wind down the opportunity of speaking here—and certainly we will hear from a number of others this evening in the Legislature—on this first day of Education Week, I think there is nothing better than to have a piece of legislation before this House that teachers had been looking for and that parents had been looking for. I know that, as a retired educator, during my years in the classroom I tried to have many positive reinforcements in the classroom, as do most educators today. But there are certainly opportunities for students to step out of line and there have to be appropriate consequences and appropriate opportunities in the future.

Those are the comments that I would like to present to this House this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh in this Education Week and in the debate here this evening on Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety.

I'd like to touch on another aspect of safety, and that is related to school supervision time. I've had a meeting with representatives of the parent council in Muskoka, representing about six different schools, and they're concerned with inadequate supervision of primary-age children that's a direct result of this government's actions in negotiating a contract that reduces supervision time from 100 minutes to 80 minutes to 60 minutes over three years. I'm hearing from parents that there are now situations where there are four or five classes of young children being supervised by one teacher. This is not a good situation. It is not a safe situation. You might have a child choking in one room and obviously the supervisor, the person in charge, would not be aware of it. So this is a dangerous situation, and it's going to get worse as that

supervision time is cut back. This is a serious safety problem.

It was also brought to my attention, as the result of an incident that happened in Muskoka, that there aren't sufficient numbers of staff trained with CPR and first aid. It would seem to me that we need just about everyone in a school environment trained in CPR and first aid so that if we do get an emergency happening, that person is there to step in to provide the assistance needed.

That supervision time also is a problem at recess, where you have young children without adequate supervision time. As I say, it's as a direct result of the actions of this government. It's something that needs to be remedied.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm going to get a chance a little bit later to speak in detail on this legislation. I'm just going to comment on one of the points that the member raised, which I think is an important point, and that is the issue of the ability to expel students from school. I understand why, at times, teachers or principals feel that expulsion from school is necessary, but I often wonder how effective it is at being able to deal with the root problem.

You have kids of all ages out there, especially in the later primary grades through the high school grades, who have problems at home or have problems in their own personal lives and who cause a great disruption within a classroom and within the school, and I understand that's real. But I've always disagreed with the idea that you should be able to expel somebody out of the education system so that you pass your problem from the school to society. It seems to me the issue is that we have to provide the support to our schools and school boards in order to have the dollars to provide the kinds of programs that you need in order to keep those kids in the school. Otherwise, what are we doing? We're just passing off our problem to somebody else in society. It might be the police; it might be social services. Who knows? Sometimes a lot of these kids fly straight when they leave as well. That's the other side of the story.

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One of the aspects of this bill that I'm supportive of is the initiative to make sure there's a better process in regard to the question of expelling somebody from the school altogether, never to return. If we give the kind of support that we need to our teachers, principals and school boards to make sure that we try to deal with these children so that they're able to succeed, we'll be far better off as a society. Allowing an expulsion without any appeal or any process is, in the end, a disservice not only to the child but in the long run a disservice to society.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm not sure whether the government caucus is going to speak to these questions and comments or not, but I'm going to have an opportunity in a few moments to speak to Bill 212.

First of all, I want to say it's a pleasure to take part in this debate on the week that we call Education Week in the province of Ontario. Although school discipline has

not been a huge issue in the riding of Simcoe North, one of the things I want to put on the record tonight is the number of very positive things that are happening in our schools and some of the neat things that are happening in a number of the schools I've visited. I'm certainly appreciative of that.

I'm not so sure if any government ever gets education 100%, because it's a ministry where right now we're seeing declining enrolment with the demographics across the province, and it's affecting a lot of our school boards. I'll talk about that a little bit in my comments later. One of the things happening out there with education is the fact that there's a lot of pressure on school boards to look at some of the smaller schools, particularly the smaller schools across rural Ontario, and the threat of closure is always there. We've seen a number of them for years now. One thing I'd like to put on the record tonight is how much I quite often think that the smaller the school, the better the opportunities are for some of the younger people. Anything we can possibly do to keep our small schools open is a challenge that all members of this Legislative Assembly should support. I look forward to making a few comments in a few minutes' time, and of course I'll be supporting this legislation.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I just want to take a couple of minutes to add some comments on this particular piece of legislation. We talk about the challenges facing education with declining enrolment. That's across the province. I know that a week ago or so I met some folks from Spring Valley Public School in my riding in the municipality of Brighton. Obviously, these folks are concerned about declining enrolment, but they also talked to me about rural schools and how important they are to their community. They were quite pleased with the way that we've moved on the education file, but there's that sort of cloud that, with declining enrolment, schools might have to amalgamate. This is why it's important to protect public education.

We've been working very closely with these folks. Yes, nobody will ever deny that there are some challenges. The challenges are there. But I think we're committed in a non-partisan way, as I hear from the members opposite who are prepared to support this piece of legislation, to deal with issues like bullying and suspensions and those kinds of things. We need to do all we can to protect our public education sector and work with the parents' councils, schoolteachers, principals and all members of society because it's, as I've said in the past, our future. We cannot deny it. As I visit a number of schools in my riding, it's really refreshing to see these young minds, and it's encouraging that I know that we're going to have a bright future. I'm prepared to support this legislation like every other member in this House will.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

Mr. Brownell: I apologize for the delay. I would like to thank those who spoke on the bill. With this being Education Week, I thank all of the members who stood and spoke to their feeling on this bill as related to the

constituents in their riding and to those who teach in their riding.

The teachers of this province are very excited about opportunities that have been given to them and the opportunities afforded to them in the last few years. I look at my daughter, for example, as a new teacher in the riding, a second-year teacher in her first full year of teaching. She's often commented to me about opportunities that she's had since she started teaching and she's also talked to me about the frustrations. As some of the members indicated, there are frustrations. I know that we had some comments about the expulsions of students, but there has to be a spectrum, and that's what was alluded to in the presentation that I made: that spectrum and the range of a progressive approach to discipline in the classrooms across Ontario.

I indicated that they're from in-school suspensions to referrals to consultations to suspensions and then expulsions. Expulsions should come as the last step and there should be all those other appropriate opportunities, and the opportunity of integrating students back into the classroom, those students who have gotten themselves into trouble. I think that as we continue this debate tonight, we will hear more about the opportunities that we have with Bill 212 in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debates?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to be able to rise this evening and speak on Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety. I understand that although we're having second reading debate tonight, it'll probably be the last night of debate. The government has decided to time-allocate this bill. That is a little disappointing, but they've been time-allocating every bill lately.

Anyhow, school discipline—and of course it's interesting that we're debating this bill during Education Week. That's one of the things that I wanted to mention tonight in my comments. And I'd like to talk about a number of the schools in my riding that I've visited lately.

I understand why you need legislation like Bill 212. There are obviously areas of the province where the bullying and the gangs—there's just a real issue, socioeconomic issues, where you need legislation. Of course, our government thought we had it correct with the Safe Schools Act and that there might be amendments needed down the road. We're not saying for a second that any government gets it 100% right because, let's face it, we need to know that all the people in the classroom—the teachers, their assistants and, of course, the students—feel safe and disciplined, and that school is a fun place to be where the kids get their education.

It's amazing, as you deal in politics, to watch the education system over the years. Up in Simcoe county, we've got a lot of rural community schools and they are considered large schools today compared to what the schools were like 30, 40 or 50 years ago when we had a number of one-room schools across all of Simcoe county. My father's school was a small school, just on the

opposite side of the hill from the Mount St. Louis Moonstone ski resort. This is going back 65, 66 years ago when my dad was a grade 6, 7 and 8 student. He was one of the closer ones to the school. He used to take a toboggan down the hill every morning and he had to get the fires going for the teachers and for all the students—it was a one-room school. The majority of the people who graduated out of the Hobart school at that time were very, very successful people and had good families and earned good livings and were good, active members of the community.

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My wife was in the last class of what they called the North River School back in Matchedash. It was a larger one-room school, but nonetheless grades 1 to 8 were all in the same classroom. The reality is there was a real bonding between the students and the teachers in those schools. Even to this day, they get together for parties and homecoming sorts of things in the summer months and talk about a lot of the old days because they were so closely knit in those communities.

Of course, we came a long way when we created the school boards. I know at one time we had 200-some school boards in the province of Ontario. Our government, the Mike Harris government, downsized that to about 72 boards. This government has chosen to leave those 72 boards in place, although I thought they might have wanted to change that and go back to the 200-some boards that were there before. I guess we did do something right or this government would have changed it back.

In my riding, I wouldn't say that discipline is a big problem in the schools. I'd like to make a few comments about a number of the schools in my riding that I've visited lately and some of the nice things that are happening in those schools and, of course, brag a little bit about some of the schools that are in the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board and the Simcoe County District School Board and the two French boards that we have in the riding of Simcoe North.

Just recently I was out to Marchmont Public School. I have three granddaughters who attend that school. I was there for Earth Day. I've got to tell you, I was absolutely amazed at what the students and the teachers had accomplished at that school. They had brought in other schools to do environmental projects. They had it all in the large gymnasium. They showed off all the environmental concerns and projects they had created and had on display for the parents and teachers and other students as well.

What had happened at the Marchmont school in particular I thought was something that could be displayed in almost any school. Actually, I would have hoped that a lot more—or we could even take a project like that on Earth Day and take a number of adults out to see some of things the students had accomplished in their projects at that school.

Just a week ago I had an opportunity to go to the Uptergrove elementary school just east of Orillia. I men-

tioned this in the House last week, but at that school they've had some absolutely phenomenal class projects. I was there for the DARE graduation with the Ontario Provincial Police. It's a program where they bring in a constable, in this case Constable Gerry Dwyer. He worked with the grade 6 students on the dangers of drug abuse and alcoholism and all these sorts of things. The students all graduated that day. But that's also the school where Her Honour Adrienne Clarkson visited about three years ago or maybe four years ago. She came to honour a couple of students who saved the life of a school bus operator using an EpiPen, because the operator had been allergic to peanut butter and had come into contact with it somehow. The students actually saved her life and Adrienne Clarkson came down to honour them.

A couple of times this winter I've had the opportunity to visit Huron Park Public School up in Midland. They've got a program up there called Cuddle Up and Read, and it started out as an evening program run by teacher Debbie Just. She is a very strong-willed and certainly a very bright teacher who loves to get people to learn to read. They bring in sort of dignitaries and guests from the community to read to groups of students and their parents. Just recently, they extended that program to school during the day. Vice-principal Mark Pinell ran the program, and we had a number of people go in to read storybooks to kids, and they got them to ask questions etc. I was really quite impressed with how it was organized and the interest from the kids and actually how disciplined the kids were in that particular school, because they listened carefully while you read and then asked questions in a very polite manner after. I keep going through this list—I'm talking about school discipline. It was amazing in each case of all these schools that I visited how much discipline teachers had over the particular students in those classes. Again, I'm more or less bragging about these schools because I felt that they had gone out of their way to do a really good job.

I've been at another school a couple of times in the last year, and they visited Queen's Park one day. That's Warminster Elementary School, just west of Orillia. I'd been invited there through teacher Chad White. He's been a family friend for a number of years and I know his parents very well. We visited the school to talk to the students. They came here to Queen's Park. They actually had their picture taken right here in the Legislature, and I can tell you they were very proud to be here. Mr. White teaches grade 4/5. It's always interesting to listen to these kids and answer questions in the classroom, because they're just sponges for information. They love to ask questions and they love to be part of any presentation. They like to ask members of Parliament or their mayor or people from the community who visit their school a lot of questions, and it's fun to be part of it.

I have another school that I visited not too long ago, and that's East Oro Public School, which is sort of southwest of Orillia. Stu Finlayson is the principal there. I know that Stu's always looking for new programs and new ideas for the school. I was really happy not too long

ago when I had the opportunity to talk to Robbie Grossman, who's the son of a former leader of our party here at Queen's Park, Larry Grossman. There is a foundation in memory of his dad, and he was able to give some money from that foundation to the East Oro Public School because the Grossman family has a cottage not too far from there on Lake Simcoe. I know that every time I visit that school, again, I see discipline. The East Oro school, along with the Shanty Bay Public School and the school at Edgar, the W.R. Best school—each and every year they're the three main schools that visit the Oro World's Fair. I always see the students there, and again very well disciplined, great students.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Moonstone public school, which is only about five kilometres from where I live, under Principal Lisa Ewanchuk. I attended a bingo there one night as a fundraiser. I go there each year on Canada Day and usually visit the schools for their public speaking contests as a judge. Again, I enjoy doing that and always enjoy how bright the students are and how innovative they are and enjoy being invited to those types of things.

I believe this coming Saturday is the 50th anniversary of St. Bernard Catholic school in Orillia. John Lynch is the principal there, and I know John has a lot of ceremonies planned around the 50th anniversary. Again, whenever you attend one of the schools in the Catholic system, they seem to be very much disciplined, and the students, in my opinion, seem to really enjoy being at school. It's a joy to be there.

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I want to go back just for a second to the whole idea of small-school closures. I know my friend from Northumberland mentioned it earlier. With the declining enrolment in rural schools—and we have that even in Simcoe county, which has a higher rate of growth than most areas of the province. But if there's one area we can all do better on, it's the threat of these school closures. I'm not sure what the final answer is. I know that every government represented here today has had to close schools because the funding just wasn't there. But I can tell you, as an MPP, as a parent or as a citizen, when you attend the rural schools, whether it's 200 students or 250 or 300, whatever it may be in size, you can be nothing but impressed by the quality of education, by the discipline and by the part they play in the community.

I know one school we had was Hillsdale public school at the far western end of my riding, and I can tell you that at one time they wanted to close that school, close it right down, period. Instead, the board made the decision to add onto it. And I can't recall the award they received, but just recently they received a major award that recognized the benefit they were and the great school that Hillsdale was. I apologize for not knowing the name of the award they received. But it could have been closed down.

So that's an area I think we can all do better on. I don't know what the answer is. It may be that you need changes to the funding formula, it may be special assistance, but I can tell you that when you visit these

small rural schools, the average person is nothing but impressed by the quality of education the children are receiving and by the community partners they really are, because many times those schools are the very hub and the very centre of their communities.

When we're talking about discipline, we know there are often kids who fall through the cracks. There's an area I'd like to compliment tonight that is in my riding and in the Simcoe county ridings. The member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Joe Tascona, the member from Simcoe-Grey, Jim Wilson, and myself met last Friday with the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe County. They've gone through a very difficult time. Following the auditor's report last year that identified a number of problems with some of the children's aid societies in the province, unfortunately, almost all the children's aid societies were branded with that same statement. I can tell you that it has hurt the morale and it has hurt basically, I guess, the working conditions of the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe County. I had the opportunity to meet with them, along with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Tascona, trying our best to see what we could do to instil confidence and to change the public perception—that not all children's aid societies have made bad decisions. I can tell you that the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe County has been well managed for many decades. If anything, I think they have probably always been underfunded. That's sort of an ongoing problem that the children's aid societies have, but they've always been able to attract a number of good foster parents. They've saved a lot of children's lives by the fact that they've been out there, that they've had the professional staff on duty 24 hours a day. They've been able to help families in need and basically children in need at those times.

I want to put on the record tonight how pleased I am with their performance, and I would ask my other community partners and the media in Simcoe county to take a good look at the children's aid society. It's a well managed and very professional organization that looks after many thousands of children every year and in fact saves many lives and helps many lives along the way.

I know we're winding down here now, and I just wanted to say that although I know I haven't really spoken to the bill as far as the actual contents of the bill, I wanted to talk about how important some of our small rural schools are, when I go into these schools, the discipline I see. I think that's so important, and I guess that's really one of the things that I'm so proud of, being a member of provincial Parliament representing a rural-type riding, because over and over again when I visit these schools, I see schools that are caring, I see schools that are disciplined, and I see schools where the kids really want to be.

I understand we are time-allocating this bill probably tomorrow night or tomorrow afternoon or whenever it may be, but I would hope that any piece of legislation that would involve discipline would get the support of the House. Probably we won't get it right every given time,

and I'm not saying for a minute we should, but I think there's an opportunity here by supporting this and moving on, that we try it and see what problems there are. For those areas of the province that need discipline and better school safety, it will be an opportunity to actually improve upon that.

I know we have a number of other speakers ready to speak on it tonight. I just wanted to wind up with one thing. If I could find anything really annoying with our school system in Simcoe county, it's the fact that they have all their graduation ceremonies on the same evening. Maybe the minister could send out a letter and say, "Can you hold your graduation ceremonies on different evenings?" It seems that about six or seven graduation ceremonies are held on the same evening and the other ones are the mornings after or whatever. We like to attend those graduation ceremonies. I think the members of Parliament, the MPPs and the mayors all like it, but unfortunately, the way they turn out, they all seem to be on the same evening.

Anyhow, it has been a pleasure to speak to this tonight. I look forward to any comments and look forward to future debate on the bill. I will be supporting this bill. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the member from Simcoe North, I too want to focus on small schools and my concern about how some of these small schools will be able to actually implement section 312 of the bill, which is a new section that calls on boards to provide programs for suspended pupils and expelled pupils. I raise that because in my riding they have four boards and some of those boards operate very small schools, but I also have two unorganized areas that have school authorities, where that school authority looks after a single school—a very small school in one case, only eight pupils; in the other case, even fewer than that.

While I agree with the new section 312 because, of course, I'm not interested in kids being suspended or expelled, being outside of the school system, not getting any support, not getting any help, the reality is, in order to implement some of these programs some of these small schools, in particular, are going to need some extra special funding in order to do that. I read in the minister's statement that \$23 million will be allocated. It's not clear to me if that's new funding, but I have to tell you, if you look at the level of students who were suspended or expelled last year—in the range of \$150,000—that's a large number of students. That's a lot of money. That's a lot of programs that are going to be required. I don't disagree with that. I absolutely want those programs to be established. The issue for me, though, as a member who has two small school authorities in particular: What is the funding that is going to be available for the school authorities, in particular, to actually put this in place?

The other thing I worry about is that the policies and procedures and guidelines of the minister with respect to the new programs will be developed by the minister,

developed by regulation. The question is, when will that happen and how adequate will they be? And most importantly, who is going to have input into the process of developing those policies and procedures that will actually form the basis for these programs that school boards are supposed to implement and enforce? So those are some of the concerns I have as a member who represents some small schools as well.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member from Simcoe North. I'm pleased to hear he is generally supportive of the bill. It was interesting that he spoke a lot about rural schools. In fact, when the safe schools action team did our consultation, one of the problems that we found with the current legislation was that when students under the current legislation are expelled, although if they're fully expelled there is an expectation that they should be able to go to an alternative program, and in urban areas that often happened, when you went into rural areas, if students were long-term suspended or expelled, there were often no programs in place at all to help them get back on track and back into school, which is what we obviously want to happen. Because there were no alternative programs available in most rural areas, kids were simply dropping out if they happened to be expelled or long-term suspended.

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That's one of the things that this bill will change. Instead of having a few alternative programs available in urban areas, there will be a requirement to provide alternative programs throughout the province. There is \$23 million in new funding being specifically provided—not just one time, but annually—to school boards throughout the province.

The member from Nickel Belt has noted that when you get into very small rural areas, that can be a challenge. But the legislation specifically provides that boards may co-operate in providing those alternative programs, and I think that as we get into more rural areas that may be what they do.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech of the member from Simcoe North on this education bill, Bill 212. I know the member from Simcoe North is very proud of his riding of Simcoe North. He always likes to trumpet success stories in the riding of Simcoe North, so of course he went on at great length about the Earth Day ceremonies that were going on. I know he likes to get around to all the graduation ceremonies. Certainly I'm looking forward to attending our youngest son Winston's graduation from high school this year from Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School, as well as many other ceremonies this year.

This morning I started out the day by being up at Callander fairly early, just outside of the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, to attend a Parry Sound municipal association meeting. The mayor of Parry Sound brought up an issue with me to do with the Near North District School Board. He told me how he's concerned with how

well some of the elementary schools are doing in the Parry Sound area. In fact, the Parry Sound council passed a resolution. I'll just read a part of it:

“...in the West Parry Sound area performed considerably below those of other Ontario schools in communities with similar socio-economic characteristics,” ...

“Now therefore be it resolved that the Near North” District School Board “be requested to provide a full and proper reply on how the board intends to respond to the study and improve EQAO results in future tests for schools in the West Parry Sound area and further,

“That this resolution be circulated to” among other people, myself and the Minister of Education.

The mayor brought up a concern about a number of the elementary schools in the Parry Sound area. This being Education Week, it would be a great week for the Minister of Education to address the concerns raised by the mayor of Parry Sound and improve the performance and the way some of the children are doing in the Parry Sound area.

Mr. Bisson: I guess some don't understand the difference between a school authority and a school board, but that's a whole other story.

I get an opportunity in this particular debate, a little bit later on, to participate and put a couple of things on the record. I think it's important that it be said that there are a few things that need to be seriously thought about in regard to how we approach the issue of expulsion of students.

I was saying earlier, I've never favoured the expulsion of students. I've always thought that if you get somebody in grade 9, 10, 11 or 12 and you expel them out of school for bad behaviour, at the end of the day what are you doing but transferring the problem to society? On the other hand, schools and teachers are very challenged in dealing with problem kids. It's real; it's true. There are problem kids out there who basically act out in school and act out in the class and make life fairly difficult for other students at times and teachers and others. But certainly there has to be a way to address this problem in regard to being able to find ways to support kids so we can get them on the right track and they can get the education they need so that later on in life they can make choices about post-secondary education and eventually move on to bigger and better things in their lives.

Throwing a kid out of school—actually, I remember that one of my buddies, when I went to high school, was kicked out of school three weeks into grade 9. The guy never did return to school because he had been kicked out for bad behaviour in school and he was compulsive in his habits—let's just put it that way—but all that did was just transfer the problem back to the home and back into the community. Eventually, this particular guy got his life straight, but it wasn't until many, many years later, and eventually him going back and doing upgrading and getting himself together and returning to college and getting himself into a trade. He's now well employed and works in the building trades. But to say that expulsion

itself is an answer—it's not. This is one of the things this bill tries to do, and I'll speak to that a little bit later.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Guelph–Wellington, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Timmins–James Bay for their comments. I guess I don't really have an awful lot to add, other than that I was really happy to comment on some of the activities in some of the schools I've visited more recently in my riding. I've got to tell you that I've been very, very impressed with each of the schools I've visited over the years.

I guess I want to sum up by saying that I'm very concerned about the small schools. I know that will be a topic for other members here tonight, and I don't know when we'll actually ever resolve that. But I guess what I want to put on the record is that I think these schools in many of these small hamlets or small villages are really and truly, in a lot of cases, the hub of the community. When you see maybe two or three of those closed to build a big one or a bigger one somewhere else, I'm not sure that's really good for communities in rural Ontario. What I'm trying to say is that I think the challenge we have as legislators is to try to keep as many of them open as possible. There may be wings of schools we could close down; there may be classrooms we could close down. But at least we could do our very best to keep communities viable by having these schools remain open. I think it is a challenge that I hope everyone would always support. I can't think of anything more disappointing than seeing a school close down in a small community and just left there as a vacant building.

It's been a pleasure to make a few comments tonight, and I look forward to seeing others debate this bill as well.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure to participate in the debate tonight on Bill 212. I'm going to focus my remarks on disabled students and special-needs students, and how the Safe Schools Act in its present form has made life very difficult and very challenging for these students, and to question as well why it has taken this government so long to respond to what have been some very obvious and serious shortcomings and pitfalls in the legislation.

Regrettably, from my perspective, dealing with the Safe Schools Act has not been a priority for the government. It seems to me that it's coming very late in the day, in terms of legislation, when it was clear from the get-go that the bill had serious problems when it was implemented in September 2001.

In fact, if you start with a little bit of history, and that's what I'm going to do, if you go back to 1997, the Ministry of Education itself identified that any number of students who were disabled—in some cases, severely disabled—were at much greater risk than other students of being expelled or being suspended, and that the government had some kind of obligation to be clear that that kind of behaviour wouldn't result in those kinds of

outcomes for students who had no control and who, in some cases, didn't know any better in terms of their behaviours and how appropriate they might be in the classroom.

So let me deal with this, going back to 1997. This is what's called Draft Monograph No. 5, dated October 2, 1997. It's a Ministry of Education document that is entitled Guidelines for the Implementation of the Ministry of Education and Training's Violence-Free Schools Policy with Respect to Exceptional Pupils and Others with Special Needs. It says:

"Some students who have violent outbursts are not wholly responsible for their behaviour. Some students with severe disabilities have varying levels of understanding and controlling acceptable behaviour. These students may need additional support to understand, change and demonstrate acceptable behaviour consistently over time...."

"The ministry is concerned that if such pupils are suspended or expelled when behavioural episodes occur, these pupils will never have access to the education they require to succeed. If suspensions and expulsions are used before other educational strategies are tried, per the IEP, the student will be denied the very type of educational program which has the potential to reduce or even eliminate the pupil's unacceptable behaviour."

"Just as we would remediate a pupil who fails a mathematical/language test, rather than use suspensions or expulsions, we need to review the remedial strategies which can be used when pupils fail to meet behavioural objectives in their IEP. To do otherwise may potentially be viewed as discrimination toward a child due to disability...."

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"Exceptional pupils with behavioural and social goals in their IEP may not be able to make a cause-and-effect connection between their behaviour and the clear consequences of suspension and expulsion. Furthermore, for some students with severe disabilities, it may not be possible for the individual to control their behaviour. For these students, the behaviour may be a way of communicating, rather than a wilful act of malice. In this situation, the standard route of suspension leading to expulsion may not only be unfair, but may result in denying pupils who have disabilities access to education to which they are entitled under human rights legislation."

So it's very clear that as far back as 1997, the Ministry of Education recognized internally that suspension and expulsion of students with special needs, especially those who are severely disabled, made no sense, especially if those very same pupils did not have a clear sense of cause and effect and consequence.

The point is that, right from 1997, the government should have known, and did know, that it was a bad idea to implement a Safe Schools Act where, in fact, suspension and expulsion would probably be the order of the day for all students, regardless of whether they had disabilities—but that's the group I'm focusing on tonight. It's also very clear that the current government has

known that it has been bad, right from the beginning, right from the time they were elected, and it has taken until now, about five months before the election, before we finally see some legislation to deal with the very clear and obvious shortcomings of a bill that was implemented as far back as 2001.

Let me give a bit more history, because, as I said, the Safe Schools Act went into effect in September 2001. By December of that same year, ARCH and the Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education were in the process of making recommendations to the former government to change the act. So, three months after it had been implemented, groups were already coming forward who were concerned about exceptional students, particularly disabled ones, to say, "This is impacting them unfairly, and we need to do something very serious about that." Those groups wanted to ensure that there was no discrimination or discriminatory effect on students with disabilities as a result of this particular legislation.

That is why, in December 2001, the coalition, along with ARCH, made the following recommendations to the former government with respect to changing the law:

"(1) Amend the Education Act so that, as in the case of mandatory suspensions, mitigating factors related to disability will be considered with respect to discretionary suspensions....

"(2) Amend Ontario Regulation 106/01 such that section 1 is available as a defence to either a mandatory or a discretionary suspension.

"(3) Amend the Education Act so that, as in the case of mandatory expulsions, mitigating factors related to disability will be considered with respect to discretionary expulsions. For example, the following amendment could be made"—which now mirrors the language in the act that's before us.

"(4) Amend Ontario Regulation 37/01 such that section 2 is available as a defence to either a mandatory or a discretionary expulsion.

"(5) Amend Ontario Regulation 474/00 so that it is clear that it has no application to students (including students with disabilities). The regulation was not intended to be used against students, whose behaviour is governable through the application of the suspension and expulsion provisions, both of which have corresponding appeal mechanisms." It goes on to suggest a number of changes in that regard as well.

So as far back as December 2001, two groups very concerned about disabled students in particular were talking to the former government, making recommendations about the changes that were absolutely essential so that the Safe Schools Act would not discriminate against disabled students. On December 4, 2003, the coalition—the same that I've referenced—and ARCH again met with the former Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, and outlined the problems to him with respect to the discriminatory nature of the Safe Schools Act as it pertained to disabled students. They gave names, they gave stories of affected students, they gave the number of students who were being affected, they gave recommend-

ations, they focused on those factors that increased risk to these students and in their proposal gave to him what is called a "no-cost law reform proposal." Again, it involved many of the proposed changes that now are finally appearing in this particular bill, but this goes back to December 4, 2003, just after the Liberals had been elected.

They involved changes to mandatory suspension, section 306; changes to discretionary suspensions, section 307; changes to expulsion in section 309; changes to discretionary expulsions in section 310; and changes to regulatory expulsions in section 305.

All of this was given to the minister. Very clear language was even given to the minister in terms of the legislation or the amendments that could be passed that would change the nature of this discrimination. Again, nothing was done by the government at that time, by the minister of the day. If you look at the timeline with respect to what happened and when, all there was was more delay and more delay, when it was clear that there was a problem and it was clear that there were recommendations out there that could be implemented to deal with the problem.

On December 15, 2004, a whole year after ARCH and the coalition had met with the Minister of Education, the minister finally announced, "The Ministry of Education is sponsoring a school safety action team of experts from across the province. I emphasize the word 'action.'" This is from Gerard Kennedy. "Very shortly, we will be bringing in very concrete measures.... There are aspects that will deserve study and will involve the education community, reference groups on the Safe Schools Act.... Those are part of a comprehensive approach, but much of it will affect positively the well-being of students early in 2005."

Here we are in 2007, the start of May tomorrow, and still this bill is just being debated on second reading and still we see no change. February 23, 2005, almost a year later, after Mr. Kennedy had announced the school safety action team that very shortly will be bringing in concrete measures, we have the minister saying, "We are going to be holding public consultations on the Safe Schools Act. I would expect a report from the safe schools action team on the Safe Schools Act portion sometime around the fall of this year."

So now we're heading into the fall of 2005, when the promise for concrete action was December 2004, when the first meeting with this minister on these issues occurred in December 2003. It doesn't seem to be much of a priority for the government to make some of these positive changes.

September 21, 2005: "The government is launching a complete review of the Safe Schools Act. The review will include public consultations and be completed this fall. These consultations will help the ministry better understand how the act could be improved." Now we've gone from February 2005 to September. We're now only starting with public consultations. We already know what could and should be done because the minister has been

briefed a couple of times now by organizations that are most concerned about how the act discriminates against disabled students, and all we're getting now is an announcement of some public consultations that are supposed to be completed in the fall of 2005.

Now we go to June 25, 2006, a new minister: "Our government made a commitment to review the Safe Schools Act. That's why the safe schools action team was asked to listen to what people from across the province had to say about it."

That's June 25, 2006, and we finally see the introduction of the act. First reading would have been April 17, 2007. That's a heck of a lot of time for consultation. That's a heck of a delay when everybody knew there were problems with this bill as it went into effect in September, when the Ministry of Education itself knew there were serious problems with expulsion and suspension of disabled students as far back as 1997, and when two very prominent groups who deal with disabled people, and disabled students in particular, were making recommendations to the government as early as December 2003. Why wasn't this a priority for somebody in the Ministry of Education?

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All of us, as members, finally got a copy of the submission that had been made by the Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education. We got a copy of this in March 2006, and it outlined a number of recommendations that had already been made to the government, not once but twice now; it also very clearly said on the overview that the coalition was very concerned that nothing had been done on this very important issue. They said in the overview: "But it is a cruel reality that the Safe Schools Act has made Ontario schools unsafe for some very vulnerable students—harming them, their families and their communities. Relevant policies are popularly known as 'zero tolerance.' We fear that this legislation has contributed to a climate of increasing intolerance, in our schools and communities. Not only can the coalition tell the ministry about the impact of the act, but we can also suggest what needs to be done to change it." Indeed, they have been doing that since December 3, 2003.

They went on to say that their requests for meetings with government and action on this issue have been denied and further went on to say: "This summer"—that would have been the summer of 2006—"the Ontario Human Rights Commission itself instigated a complaint against both the Toronto District School Board and the Ministry of Education. Terms of a recent settlement with that board require changes to its safe schools policies' and students with disabilities. We are very interested in the outcome of the complaint against the ministry—to see if legislative change will finally be forced."

It begs the question of why it took a complaint by the Ontario Human Rights Commission against both the TDSB and the Ministry of Education to finally force some legislative change, to finally force some action on this really serious issue. I regret that, because very many voices were telling the government a long time ago—the

former government and the current government—that this bill discriminates against these children, and yet no one seemed to want to do much of anything to respond to that discrimination.

I guess the kicker for me, now that we finally have the bill before us, is that, in reality, suspended and expelled students will wait until February 1, 2008, before the school boards that they are associated with will even be forced to put in a program for them. So under section 312, boards are going to be required to put in programs that must be in accordance with the policies and procedures of the minister. We don't know what those policies and procedures will be. We do know that they're probably going to be set by regulation. We don't know who's going to be invited to participate, and we don't know when they'll finally be released and when school boards will actually have access to them.

I certainly hope there's going to be some consultation with the Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education. I hope there's going to be some consultation with ARCH about these very specific guidelines, policies and procedures, especially as they pertain to programs that are being set up for disabled students who are expelled or suspended or who risk both of those very difficult options.

I said earlier—and I'm going to say it again—is there going to be enough money to put these into place? That is a very serious issue if you look at the statistics about the number of students who have been expelled and the number of students who have been suspended, and the figures I have go from 2004 to 2005. In 2004-05, there was 149,167 students who were suspended, and 1,888 were expelled. That's a lot of students out there who are going to require some very good programs to connect them back to the school system and the school community. But it is a lot of students and a lot of money, and we don't even know what the nature of those programs are going to be.

I'm also really concerned about the large numbers of younger students who have been expelled. Last year, in the TDSB alone, there were 761 seven-year-olds who were suspended. I don't know the details behind those suspensions. It's not my right to know that, but I certainly say that there is something wrong when those are the levels of suspension of seven-year-olds. We are going to need some very specific and important programs if we are going to attach even the youngest of these students back to the school environment again.

I raise again with the government the issue of timing. It's not as if we didn't know that there was a problem with the Safe Schools Act, even at the point that it was implemented in 2001. In fact, in 1997, long before the act became an act, serious concerns were being raised within the Ministry of Education about how expulsion and suspension negatively affected, more than others, disabled students, and how silly it would be to use those options to try and punish students or mete out punishment to students who, in many cases, were not even able to understand the link between doing something wrong and consequence.

In the few short moments that I have, I want to say something very specific about my concern about how many of those students who are suspended or expelled are somewhere on the autism spectrum in Ontario. Many autistic children, especially those who are severe on the spectrum, are not having their needs met in the school system, and there isn't anything in this bill that's going to do that. It's very clear that there isn't anything in the programs that are envisioned to be prepared that will deal with that, because the ministry has made it very clear that IBI, or intensive behavioural intervention, is not going to be permitted in Ontario schools.

It was very interesting that on February 23, to be exact, when the media asked the Minister of Education about autistic children and what we were doing to help them and how it was that many of these kids were out of school because they weren't allowed to have their therapist in school to help them, Ms. Wynne said, "Those days will soon be over since the government is issuing a directive to school boards that they won't be able to ignore." It's funny that on March 1, 2007, a week later, a memo went out from the Ministry of Education, from the deputy minister, that said: "The ministry will soon release a policy program memorandum on the use of applied behavioural analysis in schools. The focus of this will be on ABA teaching practices and not on intensive behavioural intervention that is used by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services' autism intervention program."

It's very clear that for autistic kids who are very severe on the spectrum and who really need their IBI therapist in the class with them in order to learn, the government is not changing the position that was in place under the former government. The government is not allowing these students—many of whom are very disabled in that context—to have the supports and services in place in the school to allow them to learn. What is provided for under section 312 of this bill is not going to allow for that either, so that those same students are going to continue to be denied access to public education because they can't have their therapist in the classroom with them. I find that very regrettable indeed.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs. Sandals: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member for Nickel Belt. First, briefly, a little bit about the timing on the safe schools action team. What was left out of the time line was the fact that if you look at problems in Ontario schools that were assigned to the safe schools team, bullying was a problem which affected many more children than expulsion and suspension did. So the safe schools action team, first of all, did an extensive consultation on bullying and then a report on bullying. Secondly, there was an extensive consultation on the issues of the Safe Schools Act.

It's interesting that one of the problems we heard about with the Safe Schools Act was the fact that in the first place, it had been written in great haste, with very little consultation, with just one or two groups of people;

in fact, when we did our consultation, we met with over 700 people in round table formats all around the province. We also dealt with a number of groups who had expertise in the field individually, including ARCH, so that there was a very extensive examination of the problem to make sure we got it right.

Specifically with respect to special education, one of the things that we heard from the spec-ed community is that it's not suspension and expulsion that are the problem, but something else, called "exclusion," which is defined in regulation 474 and which allows a principal to arbitrarily exclude a student from a school, and that this was being arbitrarily used in many cases with special education students. One of the things that we will be doing is amending that regulation so that it cannot be applied to students, and in particular, special education students.

With respect to the legislation itself, we are going to require principals to consider whether or not the student has the capacity to understand the consequences of their action. That is an important change asked for by spec-ed parents.

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Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to respond to the member for Nickel Belt. She raises a number of interesting concerns, as she always does. She's very passionate and determined in her approach to everything she does in this House, and this bill, as you see, is no exception.

I have certain questions about this bill, reading some of the sections myself, as to how they may or may not affect students who come into the situation where they could be suspended. I have some questions that I will get to as I speak a little later in the evening, with regard to the appeal mechanism and process and how that may be enacted; if you are suspended and it is up for appeal, whether or not that suspension will be held in abeyance once an appeal is launched. I'm trying to see that in the act, and I haven't been able to see it yet. That's certainly something I have a concern about, because in any situation, if you register an appeal within the prescribed number of days, it says in here that the board then has 10 days to act on it. Well, if the suspension is for 10 days, how does an appeal mean anything if it takes them 10 days to actually act on it?

So there are some things in here, and as with every other bill, I'm hoping that we can get this bill to committee for some hearings that would hopefully improve the content and the result of the legislation. But as I say, I'll have a chance to speak to it in a little more detail later on in the evening. Again, I'll compliment the member for Nickel Belt for the passion she always shows.

Mr. Bisson: Again, the member for Nickel Belt has done the job that she always does, one that goes without saying. She's done her homework—pardon the pun—she's done her research and has put forward some good points.

The one that I want to speak to, and I hope that she can comment on, is the whole issue of IBI treatment for

kids within schools. We have in my riding—and I know it can't be any different than the ridings of other members in this assembly—situations where children who are in desperate need of intervention in order to deal with the effects of autism are not able to get the kind of support they need within the classroom and within the school.

We know the battle has been a long one. The parents have been asking this government, as they asked the previous government, to re-fund IBI treatment for kids over age six. To date, it has not been done. I remember the Premier, I remember Mr. McGuinty standing in this House just a couple of seats over when he was Leader of the Opposition, swearing and saying in this House and out on the campaign trail that he thought it was wrong that the Conservative government had basically unfunded IBI treatment for kids over age six and that, if he was to become the next Premier of Ontario, it would be fixed. Well, here we are, almost four years, at the end of the mandate, and nothing has been done; in fact, this government has brought kids to court in order to obstruct their will to get the government to do only what they promised to do in the last election.

What's even harder if I have in my riding, as you all have, kids who have autism whose parents come in to see me in my constituency office or otherwise and say, "Listen, our child is having a hard time trying to cope with the socialization in school and education in general and needs to get intensive behavioural therapy within the school," and you can't get the therapist to go in to give the type of support that that kid needs in order to get through the day in school. So I commend the member. We continue to fight, and one day hopefully there will be justice for these children.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Just before I speak to Bill 212, I want to also comment on the fact that this is Education Week, and it seems appropriate to be debating this bill. I myself have a granddaughter, my eldest grandchild, who's going to be graduating in June from grade 8. For a lot of us, as parents and grandparents, we always sort of see the turning of another chapter in our book of life, and as my granddaughter Kristina moves from elementary school to high school, I'm very proud of what she's done.

Mr. Bisson: Not as proud as she is of you—oh, I got you blushing.

Mrs. Van Bommel: Thank you very much, sir.

When we talk about the issue of the amendments to the Education Act—when I was first elected, one of the first member's statements I made had to do with a young man in my riding who had committed suicide as a result of bullying. That was, for me, a very difficult time to do that, because we don't think of ourselves, in rural ridings, as having those kinds of things. Yet in rural ridings and in urban areas, the world is changing, and young people can reach into each other's homes now and they can bully each other through the Internet. When we see that we are adding bullying as an infraction for which suspension or expulsion can be mandated, I think it's

appropriate that we recognize this, because as I said, it's a changing world.

I also have to say I think it's important that we are replacing mandatory suspensions and expulsions with the ability for principals and school boards to address this in appropriate ways and to take extenuating circumstances into consideration. But I'm very glad that we are now addressing the issue of bullying.

Ms. Martel: I thank all of the members for their interventions. Let me say a couple of things in response.

The government could well have had consultation on bullying and at the same time moved forward on the changes that had been proposed as far back as December 2003 to Minister Kennedy, changes around mandatory suspension and expulsion and all of the circumstances around that, much as they appear in the bill. So there was no need to delay on a really important piece of this that had been given to the minister as far back as December 2003 so that the government could hold consultations on bullying. Of course the government should have done that, but they should have got right down to the business of moving the amendments on mandatory versus discretionary and suspensions versus expulsions, because we all knew it was a problem.

The Liberals knew it was a problem when the Safe Schools Act was being introduced under the Tories. So they had the language; they had the legislation. Much of what ARCH and the coalition brought forward actually appears in the legislation, but the government delayed and delayed and delayed for three years. From the time that Minister Kennedy promised concrete action, which was a year after he had first been made aware of this problem, the government delayed another three years before we finally got here today. There was no reason for that; there was no excuse for that. The government could have moved on the important recommendations being made by ARCH and the coalition and then brought in at another time, when the consultations were done, other changes around bullying. The government could have done both of those things if they were a priority.

I just want to get back to IBI in the class. Too many parents have children who need their IBI therapist in the classroom, and too many of these children are not learning in school because they don't have their therapist there to help them. Too many of these kids are not even in school, because their therapists are barred from the classroom; they cannot learn, because the educational assistants, as much as they want to do good work, aren't trained to work with these kids. It is past time, long past time, for the government to live up to its promise and allow IBI therapists in the classrooms in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 212 this evening. It's great to have an opportunity to speak on An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety. As we know, this act deals with safety in our schools, and I think we'd all agree that that's a prerequisite for achievement. But we'd also agree, I think, that

as well as safety in the schools, adequate funding levels for school boards, properly compensated education workers and properly maintained schools should be part of that prerequisite for a safe school environment.

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I'm going to make a couple of connections here. I want to talk as well about what's going on in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie and how some of the very positive investments that we've been making as a government have been providing real, tangible results in Sault Ste. Marie. As you know, we've provided an infrastructure fund of \$280 million that's going to leverage \$4 billion in school infrastructure across the province. For too long and for too many years, governments in the past have ignored this. We're rising to the challenge to deal with our declining infrastructure in our schools. As well, those of you around here will certainly remember the Rozanski report, which recommended that \$1.8 billion be put into education. We've exceeded that, and we're proud of that record. We've come up with over \$3.5 billion in new investment for education.

I want to talk about a couple of other things and some other programs that often don't get the recognition I think they deserve: new resources for our libraries, funding for community use of schools, breakfast programs, things like 20 minutes of daily physical activity. These all have a cumulative effect on the quality of life in our schools and an impact on safety and the outcome of safety in our schools. We can't simply speak about safety in our schools without recognizing that these topics are very interrelated. If we don't give kids the resources they need in their libraries, they will find other things to do. If they aren't coming to school properly fed and nourished to be able to learn in a positive environment, they're going to find other things to do. If we don't engage them in physical activity, they're going to find other things to do.

This is a very positive act, but I also want to connect it to some of the many important investments we're making as a government. When it comes to this particular initiative, we're going to be investing \$31 million in 2007-08 to make Ontario schools safer. We're building upon the safe schools strategy, proposing legislative amendments to the safe schools provisions of the Education Act that would be more effective in combining discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education. The proposed changes would of course continue to make student safety a top priority while also ensuring that there are strong consequences for inappropriate behaviour. There will also be greater emphasis on addressing students' inappropriate behaviour. Let's be very clear: This isn't about being soft on student behaviour; this is about finding the right remedies under very different circumstances, in many instances, to allow a student to be successful in our education system.

There are all kinds of supportive comments that have been provided that demonstrate that we're moving in the right direction. Here's what Frank Kelly, director of the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, said: "Directors of education are committed to operating safe schools

across Ontario and are pleased with the government recognizing the damages done by bullying. To maintain safe schools, it is important to allow administration to deal with this behaviour issue which often leads to violence and makes it impossible for some students to learn effectively. As well, the concept of progressive discipline is an effective and fair method used by many administrators."

Emily Noble, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, who is actually from my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, said, "We are also pleased to see that the 'zero tolerance' philosophy has been rejected by the government. Proposing a progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate student behaviour and providing programs for expelled students and those on long-term suspensions are progressive changes that allow students to continue their education while taking responsibility for their actions."

Rick Johnson, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, said, "The proposed legislative changes strike a responsible balance. They set out strong consequences for unacceptable behaviour and, at the same time, put in place alternative programs that allow students to continue their education while learning accountability if their behaviour."

"The proposed legislation supports boards in building more creative and flexible approaches to addressing the complex issue of discipline."

So it seems that it's certainly being well received by both boards and federations across the province, which is good news.

I think we have to be careful when we talk about suspensions and expulsions from school. I can give you an example: I worked for the OSSTF for a couple of years, and one of the schools I had to visit on occasion was a small school in Hornepayne, Ontario, about four and a half hours north of Sault Ste. Marie. If you know anything about this community, it's a rail town, and the high school is actually in a small shopping mall. The police station is in this building, there's a grocery store in this building—

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): A hotel.

Mr. Oraziatti: There's a hotel in this building as well, a community pool and a library.

I'll give you an example of some of the issues we were talking about when I was up at this school. A student had gone into the grocery store, ended up being charged with shoplifting and was banned from this building and this establishment. In effect, this small mall is the only thing that really exists in this community. It has all of the entertainment, all of the recreation, all of the services, so you have, in effect, now ostracized this individual from the community centre. There aren't a lot of other options.

If there's a way we can find to engage students in other programs where we can ensure they are going to take responsibility for their actions, but provide constructive programs for them as opposed to having these issues that result in these types of settings or in schools end up

becoming community problems that we all have to deal with and that become more costly later on, we're all going to be better served and we're going to help these individuals in Ontario reach their maximum potential by gaining an education, which we all know is very important.

We've tabled a number of positive amendments to this act, based on recommendations made by the safe schools team. I want to also commend our member from Guelph-Wellington, Liz Sandals, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. She is doing a fantastic job on this file. Its report, the Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action, includes a few of the following recommendations: that boards offer access to alternative programming for students who have been expelled or who are serving long-term suspensions; that mitigating circumstances be considered before any student is expelled or suspended; and that boards use progressive discipline as a matter of standard practice. I think most boards are doing this, but we do have some examples where that's not the case.

Our goal is a fairer, more consistent application of the act and individualized appropriate consequences for students. For instance, just by using recently posted data on suspensions and expulsions, we can verify that the act is not being applied consistently across the province. Boards report an extremely large variance in the rates of suspensions, anywhere from 0.5% of students in a board to 36% being suspended or expelled from schools. So there are obviously some consistency issues here. This legislation is going to help clarify some of those things and also help put programs in place to build some greater consistency in the province.

Some of the proposed legislative amendments include—and I'm just going to highlight a couple of those:

- Adding bullying as an infraction for which suspensions must be considered in recognition of the importance of addressing bullying issues, which can have a significant impact on student safety, learning and school climate. Bullying is being added to the list of infractions for suspensions.

- Replacing mandatory suspensions and expulsions for students with the requirement that principals and school boards consider and respond to all infractions that occurred in the most appropriate way using a progressive discipline approach to choose the appropriate punishment in the case of inappropriate behaviour, such as detentions, referrals for consultation or transfer before ultimately suspending or expelling students. I think most boards are doing this. Again, we do have some examples where there are some inconsistencies.

- Requiring that consideration be given to mitigating factors before students are suspended or expelled, such as the safety of other students, whether racial or other forms of harassment were involved, whether the behaviour was related to a disability or the age of the student.

- Clarifying decision-making authority around suspensions and expulsions for principals and school boards.

Under current legislation, teachers have the authority to suspend; however, teachers rarely exercise this duty in practice. Education stakeholders—notably the teachers' federations—requested that teachers' duties to suspend in the act be removed. The proposed legislation gives principals the authority to suspend and boards the authority to expel. Principals are still obligated to take into account the safety of others. That would include, for example, students and staff.

Other improvements in relation to this are providing boards with \$20 million of supports to address inappropriate behaviour, including programs for all expelled students and students serving long-term suspensions. Again, these programs would be designed to address the causes of problem behaviour and allow them to continue learning outside the classroom. That is an important connection between some of those other programs we're funding—in this particular case, it's a \$20-million initiative—but there are a host of other initiatives such as the library programs, the school breakfast program, the alternative programs, the daily physical activity, community use of schools program, a whole host of them that will help address this issue.

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Also, building capacity in school boards to address inappropriate student behaviour; things like training opportunities and professional education as well; providing training to principals and vice-principals on how to apply discipline in a non-discriminatory manner, including consideration for anti-racism, cross-cultural differences and accommodating students with disabilities. The member for Nickel Belt spoke about that issue in accommodating those with disabilities and that this not be a factor in terms of the cause for suspension, and I would certainly agree that those students need to be accommodated.

We need to maintain the current list of infractions for which suspension is considered, but we need to develop more programs to assist students before ultimately getting to the point where we need to take that particular step and before administrators across the province are left with that as the only alternative; replacing predetermined, one-size-fits-all consequences with an obligation on principals and school boards to respond to all disciplinary issues that could lead to suspensions or expulsions.

Bill 212 is just one of the examples of the positive changes that we have introduced and certainly the constituents in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie are benefiting from many of these improvements in the education sector, because we believe in a strong public education system.

We've invested over \$18 million in new funding in the school boards in the Soo over the last three and a half years. In this year's budget alone, the base budget increased at the Algoma District School Board by \$2.5 million and at the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board by nearly \$2 million as well. When I'm talking about the Algoma District School Board, funding has gone up by 10%, or over \$10 million, in the last three and a half years; per pupil funding is 32% greater today,

or \$2,800 greater per student today, and that's significant. That's despite the fact that when you calculate the decline in enrolment at the Algoma District School Board and the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board in Sault Ste. Marie, we're talking about 2,500 fewer students combined.

In Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board, funding has increased by over 11%, or \$5.8 million, again over 10% as a board, both boards, and per pupil funding in this case has gone up 34%, or over \$2,800, again despite declining enrolment of close to 1,000 students.

Investments are paying off and the percentage of students in both boards in my riding who successfully passed provincial tests have increased in most subject areas and age categories under our government, and graduation rates have gone up as well. I think that's really the test that parents look for: "Is my son's"—or daughter's—"progress improving, are they in smaller classes, are they getting the results we want them to get, and are they getting the attention they need?"

This year's budget is about \$18.3 billion, again, over \$3.5 billion in new funding in the last four years, a significant achievement, and it's certainly more than Mordechai Rozanski recommended in his report.

Scores are up. Over the last four years, more students in grades 3 and 6 are doing better in reading, writing and math. Their results in provincial tests have improved by about 10%. Grade 9 students are meeting the standard on the applied and academic math tests, up 14% and 5% respectively. In addition to that, passing of the literacy test is up by 12%.

Graduation rates are up. Over the past two years, the rate of students graduating in Ontario has increased from 68% to 73%, meaning 12,000 more students in the province are now achieving a high school diploma and are better prepared for the future. Early indicators show that more grade 9 and 10 students are also completing their courses and are on track to graduate.

I know there was some comment made by the member for Trinity-Spadina about the NDP accusing the government of manipulating the EQAO testing, and I want to read something by Charles Pascal, who is the chairperson of the EQAO board of directors and former Deputy Minister of Education, to clarify the record here. He said:

"Mr. Marchese should know this, since it was his government that created the agency. He should also know the changes he criticized were recommended by Ontario educators and confirmed by an independent review panel of world-renowned experts in large-scale assessments.

"His charge the tests were shortened to make it easier is simply wrong.

"Mr. Marchese's statement that calculators are allowed for multiple choice questions is misleading and conveniently taken out of context.

"Mr. Marchese also stated that students are being given 'unlimited time' to complete the tests. Students are being tested on their skills and knowledge of the curriculum, not on how quickly they write.

"Mr. Marchese noted education should not be about political rhetoric or election grandstanding. We agree. We hope he does, too."

That from Charles Pascal, the chairperson of the EQAO board of directors and formerly the Deputy Minister of Education, in response to the suggestion that standards are being manipulated or tests are being manipulated. Very clearly, from this board, with the panel and the recommendations coming forth, that's certainly not the case.

We're proud of the results. The investments we're making in education are getting us the results that we need in education. More students are graduating, and we certainly have less turmoil in the education sector these days. I don't think anybody would doubt that.

Class sizes are smaller. Almost all students in junior kindergarten to grade 3 are learning in classes of 23 or fewer students; 65% are in classes of 20 or fewer and are getting more individual attention—something we committed to do—and those class size numbers are reflected right across the province, something that we're certainly very pleased with.

We've listened to school boards and made changes to education funding that addresses its needs. In response, and to continue supporting higher student achievement, new funding will be allocated to support these further changes to the new education funding formula. Highlights include three new grants to provide targeted funding to schools and students identified by our education partners:

First of all, there's the new program enhancement grant to support arts and music and physical education as well as outdoor education activities that provide students with a well-rounded educational experience.

Support for schools allocation to ensure schools in small communities with low or declining enrolment remain viable. We all know too well in this province what it means when a school is closed in a small community or rural community and it is the only community centre. It's tragic, and it's an incredible challenge for the families living in that area, who have to have their children on buses for an hour or more to get to their particular school.

First Nations, Metis and Inuit education supplements will provide enhanced support for aboriginal students, something that is obviously very important, as we want to ensure that First Nations students in the province of Ontario are able to reach their maximum potential and fully participate in education.

Since 2003, we've made 10 significant improvements on how funding is delivered through the funding formula. Those improvements continue in 2007-08, with additional grants and funding for the following: 1,900 new primary class size elementary specialist and student success teachers; additional support for special education; additional support for rising transportation and utility costs; and targeted support for French-language boards.

Bill 212 seems to have consensus out there in the education sector. There is a very clear opportunity for us to move forward, to work with our young people and

ensure that they have the opportunities to reach their maximum potential in the province of Ontario. Simply suspending and expelling students—obviously there are circumstances that arise where the safety of others is the priority, and we'll need to address that.

I'm pleased to speak to this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member for Sault Ste. Marie on Bill 212, the educational bill. He referenced the Education Quality and Accountability Office test. On March 24, the Beacon Star published an article about concerns with the west Parry Sound schools citing a recent study conducted by the C.D. Howe Institute. This study put four west Parry Sound elementary schools in the bottom 20% of schools with similar socio-economic factors like family income levels and home values.

Parry Sound Mayor Richard Adams is concerned with the response of the Near North District School Board and worries that the board is overlooking the Parry Sound schools. Therefore, he has put forth a report and recommendations in council calling for the board to provide the town with a full and proper reply on how it intends to respond to the study and improve EQAO results in future tests for the schools in the west Parry Sound area. Mayor Adams understands the importance of education for the children and the district as a whole. They are looking for a response to these recognized shortcomings within the Parry Sound district because it is imperative that the education standards of these schools are improved.

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The Parry Sound resolution also asks surrounding municipalities for support on this very important issue. There should be a reason why the results of the C.D. Howe study for the Parry Sound area are different than those across the board, and it is absolutely necessary that this reason be determined so that students in the area are provided with the best possible education.

While municipal government has a limited role in education, councillors and mayors in the region are doing all they can to ensure improvements are made in Parry Sound schools. I had the opportunity this morning to chat with Mayor Richard Adams at the Parry Sound municipal meeting in Callander, and he brought this point up again. I know it's of very keen importance to municipal governments in the Parry Sound area.

Mr. Bisson: To the member from Sault Ste. Marie, on a couple of points: In regard to standardized tests being easier, I've had this conversation with teachers in my own constituency as well as in other schools I visit around the province, and what's clear is that teachers are teaching to the test. It's clear that that's part of what's going on. I think it tends to skew, somewhat, where kids are really at.

We got into this debate some years ago when I was in school: Is this mandatory testing really necessary? What does it give us in the end? I think what's clear, from the people I've been talking to, including some of the students who have participated, is that teachers are trying

to prepare the kids for a better result on the test. So it's not as if this is a snapshot in the child's learning; this is a snapshot of what the teacher does and how well the teacher does in preparing the kid for the test. So what are we really getting as a benefit out of this test? I'm not going to say that there's no benefit; of course there's a benefit. But let's not make this out to be something it's not.

The other issue is the promise that was made by the Liberals in the last election—among the many promises that were broken—the whole issue of what we do with autistic kids. I'm going to get a chance a little bit later to talk, because I am sure that each of us has had to deal with parents who have come in to our constituency offices when it comes to services their kids are not getting in school and what kids don't get after age six. This Liberal Party, in opposition, was very specific: They were going to re-fund autism services for kids over age six. They haven't done so; in fact, they've brought the parents to court. When it comes to providing IBI treatment in the classroom, that is not allowed, and I think it creates a problem where a number of kids are expelled from school because they're autistic and we can't service them in the class.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): First off, I'd like to commend the minister and her parliamentary assistant on Bill 212, for setting the environment for great learning. What is being brought forward in this bill is setting the stage for a culture of co-operation, making sure that our students are safe in the classroom and in any school setting, and that schools have the values we want them to have: respect, fair play, teamwork and success. Unless we have that culture in place, the lofty achievements we're asking our students to achieve will be difficult targets to meet. But if we do have those values and have a system in place that addresses root causes that may be taking place at a school or with a particular student, then we are setting ourselves up for success—we want at least 85% of our students going to secondary school to graduate and go on to higher education or an apprenticeship, making sure we address issues that we're facing today.

I was in a school the other day speaking to students and teachers. The issue of the day is technology: Facebook and MySpace, bringing phones into the school etc. The students as well as the teachers, but more so the students—the overwhelming majority; I asked for a show of hands—felt that some of these things, some of this technology, did not have a place in school, partly due to the bullying mechanism it provides where students can bully over the Internet. Our government is addressing that, and I think that's a very good thing.

Mr. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member from Sault Ste. Marie's comments on Bill 212. First of all, I want to comment on the member from Timmins—James Bay when he spoke about testing. Quite frankly, I'm very supportive of testing. I was on the board of governors of Durham College, and the number one question from the teaching faculty at the

college was, "Why can't we get entrance exams in?" because the graduating students from the various schools all graduated at a different standard or a different level. The one thing that testing does is ensure that there is some standard or level of consistency in all schools throughout the entire province. So I'm not opposed to it. Yes, you are going to get teachers who specifically focus on those areas, but you have to start somewhere, and I think it was a good idea.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie spoke about Hornepayne. I know that facility well. It has the city hall, the library, the hotel, as I was calling out to him—the whole kit and caboodle in the one main mall. Taking it to the other side, what happens when a student gets suspended from school there? Does that mean the individual is completely removed from the mall? I really don't know that, or how it works or some of the other components of what takes place. I expect to be speaking later on, but I'm not sure about that. What happens, for example, in Mattawa? Let's go back to Hornepayne. If that student gets expelled from the school and is assigned to another school, what are you going to do with a high school student? Where are you going to send them from Hornepayne, when you're talking about all those hours and the distance away from all the other communities? How would you assign another school in that particular case? As well, is there any transmission between school boards? You've got other school boards. In the event that that takes place, let's look at Mattawa. What happens in Mattawa when you have two school boards sharing the same facility? If an individual gets expelled in Mattawa and probably would have to go to North Bay, chances are the parents would send them to the other school board, which is in the same building in Mattawa. What are you going to do in that particular case?

Our job in opposition is to point out some of these things. Quite frankly, in a lot of rural or smaller communities in Ontario, we may see some challenges.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Oraziotti: I want to thank the members from Parry Sound—Muskoka, Timmins—James Bay, Mississauga East and Oshawa for their comments on my remarks this evening on Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety.

I guess what I'm hearing this evening is certainly not controversial; it's not contentious. I think we have some consensus, certainly here, that we need to develop programs that are most appropriate for various types of behaviour in our school systems across the province and ensure that suspension and expulsion is not the first step in dealing with behaviour, depending on what it is, obviously. But we have cases in school boards across the province where that seems to be the case, and we believe there are other options. There are programs that need to be developed to ensure that students can continue to be engaged in the education system. If we simply move these out into the community, they're going to become

community problems, they're going to be larger, they're going to be more costly and so on.

I think we also have to ask ourselves, are all the components in the school system there for success? Do we have adequate learning resources in our libraries, do we have adequate class sizes, do we have community use of school programs, do we have a breakfast program, do we have daily physical activity programs? If we provide all these other programs, many of the issues around safety and bullying can be managed in the context of supporting the whole student and the entire school system. So before we simply focus all our efforts on safety, let's make sure we have a good look at how we're funding and supporting our education system so that we minimize these issues that become contentious in the province and that impact the lives of many people in the province.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark—Carleton): I normally would not speak on a bill of this nature, at least at length, and I probably will not use up my full 20 minutes. But having come from a very, very proud family that was very involved in education, I'm trying to transpose that to the present-day situation we face in our school system. It is a little difficult for me to transpose not only my own experience in the school system and trying to figure out where we're going in the future.

One of the points of interest is that tomorrow afternoon at 1:15 I'm going to be in my granddaughter's classroom—

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): You're not old enough to be a grandfather.

Mr. Sterling: I am old enough to be a grandfather, actually six times and maybe seven, depending on when the next baby arrives. It might have arrived already—another little girl, thank God.

Anyway, tomorrow afternoon I'm going to be with my granddaughter Tierney Sterling at St. Philip Catholic school in Richmond, Ontario—which is not in my riding now but will be after the next election, hopefully—and I'm going to be talking a little bit about what I did when I was a young boy going to school, talking about my experience at school and what my experience is now, what I've done during my life and that kind of thing.

Actually, my grandson Brayden, who is in the same school and is five years old, put my name in the hat as well. He was very upset that I wasn't going to his class as well, so that he will also have a grandparent in his class. This is during Education Week, so I'm going to enjoy it as well in terms of going over to see Brayden.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): You can still get nine holes in, Norman.

Mr. Sterling: I think it's going to be raining tomorrow, so I won't be able to golf.

My mom was a teacher. As many members of the Legislature know, she recently passed away. My dad was

a principal in a school. I want to go back in history a long time. When I was a youngster, if I got in trouble at school, the last person in the world that I would tell I was in trouble would be my mom. If I came home and said I was in trouble at school, I would get double the dose of punishment when I got home, because my mom always took the side of the teacher, of the school, of authority and all the rest of it.

It's a long way to come to a situation where we're starting to set up an appeal process for parents and students when trouble brews on the school scene. I think it's a bit of a breakdown in what has happened. I realize, of course, that we were very lucky in our family that none of my siblings or I had any problems with regard to being challenged; we were not afflicted with any challenges of any nature when we went to school.

When I look at this particular piece of legislation, I'm neither here nor there, because I really do want, and I think the members of our caucus want, the very best to occur with regard to amendments to this particular piece of legislation. But I do want to point out, as our critic Mr. Klees has pointed out, that section 310 of this amended piece of legislation in fact mirrors very much the legislation before. Section 310 actually mirrors the former section 311 of this bill, where it says, "A principal shall"—shall—"suspend a pupil if he or she believes that the pupil has engaged" in certain activities. So the principal has no choice but to suspend a student under certain circumstances, and there are eight different circumstances where that would happen:

"(1) Possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm.

"(2) Using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person."

The principal shall suspend a student if the student commits "a physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner." The principal shall suspend a pupil "committing sexual assault." The principal shall suspend a student "trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs." The principal shall suspend a pupil "committing robbery." The principal shall suspend a pupil "giving alcohol to a minor." And the principal shall suspend a pupil "for any other activity that, under the policy of a board, is an activity for which a principal must suspend" a student.

So the legislation hasn't really changed that much in terms of where we're going. People talk about zero tolerance and that now this is getting away from zero tolerance. I'm not certain that is the case.

But then the legislation follows in terms of what must happen, and there is a very complicated, involved scheme with regard to appeal, notice of appeal and all those kinds of things that follow the suspension taking place.

Going back to my original comments with regard to the history of my particular makeup, it is that the school, the teacher and the principal were always right, and I have a little concern that this legislation may be turning it a little much too much against the trust we place in the hands of the teachers and the principals of our schools. I

truly believe that this trust relationship is very important and that parents and our society and our Parliament must not make the job of the principal and the teachers much more difficult than it is presently.

I believe, however, that this government has failed to provide the alternatives that should be there if a student cannot succeed in the mainstream of our system. I think they have failed to do that. Prior to the last election, as my critic points out, the opposition then, now the government—the Liberals—railed against the Safe Schools Act. But it has been three and a half years since that election in 2003, and now we see, in the last, dying minutes of this government, a piece of legislation come forward to try to address this situation in setting up an appeal process. I heard from the government benches that \$18 million—I think that was the number I heard the former speaker talk about in terms of setting up programs—was a wonderful solution. Well, \$18 million is a lot of money to you and me and to everybody out there on the street, but \$18 million of \$18 billion—there's a thousand million in each billion, so \$18 million is one thousandth of the budget of the Ministry of Education. This money is really quite minuscule in relation to the huge number of students we have in Ontario, to try to capture those students who are having difficulty with the general education system of our province. I do not believe, notwithstanding what the government said during the past election, that this is a realistic solution to the problem at hand.

The other thing is that when the former Minister of Education, who has now retired from provincial politics, negotiated a province-wide agreement with the teachers of our province, he lessened the responsibility of the teaching profession for supervision. If that was part of the negotiations, that was part of the negotiations. But I remember back in the early days when I was a very young child going to school. My mom would head out the door at about 7:30 in the morning, before I would head off to school—I only had to walk about a block and a half or two blocks to school—because she taught school. My father died when I was very young, so she was on her own and she supported a family of four kids on her own. She taught school all during that period of time. She was out the door at 7:30 to go on yard duty at 8. The kids would arrive at 9; my mom would be out there, whether it was 10 below zero or whatever.

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Mr. Bisson: That's pretty warm, 10 below.

Mr. Sterling: For Timmins it's warm, but for Ottawa it's not so warm. At any rate, she would be out there very early. I can remember all the time that she did suffer supervision, and she did actually go to the school before that and put work on the board for her grade 2 class; 35 kids was a normal number.

We've come a long way from that particular situation. What I want to say is that the kind of supervision that was required of teachers then is not required now, and that was lessened in the contract this government agreed to sign. My critic, Mr. Klees, points out that if you're

going to do that, then it's incumbent on the government to provide the necessary resources to the boards to provide alternative supervision that will take place in the schoolyards etc., in the school corridors, to prevent bullying and other kind of things that can happen when supervision isn't there. The government has failed in that regard.

This is one of those kinds of bills that is hard not to support, because you want the system to continue to improve. If the educators and the public are saying this may be an improvement, then I'm willing to give it a nod on the ballot. I have those reservations that I have stated before, but it's not really yanking something from left to right or right to left or whatever it is, it's really notching something over a little bit, so I'm willing to give it a chance, and that's the way my party feels and my leader feels and our party critic feels.

The last thing I want to talk about is the process we're going through. I'm informed—and I have it in front of me—that Mr. Bradley has moved a time allocation motion on this particular bill. This bill is going to have two days of hearings, on May 14 and May 16, if that time allocation motion is carried, and it probably will be, because of course the government has a large majority in this place. I want to say to the government House leader that I don't think this bill should go to time allocation. I think we should have been able to come to an agreement with regard to this. I also want to say to the House leader that, as the former government House leader five or six years ago, I faced the very same problem.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I now know what it was like.

Mr. Sterling: The government House Leader says, "I now know what it was like." I only wish that the Minister of Energy, who was then the opposition House leader, was sitting beside him so he would listen to what the government House Leader now is saying.

I think that in order to make this place work a little better, we have to come to some compromises on legislation like this. Basically, I made the same argument when I was the government House leader. If, in fact, all members of the House are probably going to vote for this bill—there might be the odd one who doesn't—then we should not have to force these things to time allocation. We should be able to agree—the House leader should be able to agree—to an alternative solution.

As I say, I'm going to support this bill, with some reservations. I'm going to look at how the results come out. I think the real result will result from the financing by the government of alternative programs to deal with children who have difficulty in the mainstream part of our education. I don't think \$18 million is going to do it, but I don't know what the amount would be in order to face this. When I go way, way back, we had what we called a reform school that we would send these kids off to. I think that was probably the worst solution of all, because it probably taught them exactly the wrong thing to do, and they associated with some pretty shady people when they got to reform school.

Mr. Yakabuski: Hey, some of my best years were there.

Mr. Sterling: Notwithstanding that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke goes to the alumni events each year, as I understand it.

Having said that, I think we should vote for this bill. It would be nice if we had a longer time frame for hearings, but let's face it, we're into the last stages of our Parliament. This bill should probably have been brought forward a year ago and we would have had more time for consultation. But that's not the case, so my view is that we should get on with it, listen to what people have to say, and I would only hope that the government would be open to amendments if the public points to sections where we could make improvements to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: To the member who just spoke, you're not going to get to your grandson's class, but he knows you're a classy guy and you're going to stop in and say hi anyway. You should at the very least walk into the classroom and wave and let him know you were there. I still don't believe you're a grandfather, but that's a whole other story. I didn't think you were that old yet.

Mr. Yakabuski: Take a look.

Mr. Bisson: "Take a look," he said.

Anyway, I agree with some of the comments made by the member from Nepean–Carleton, I believe—

Mr. Sterling: Lanark–Carleton.

Mr. Bisson: Lanark–Carleton. They always change your riding names.

Mr. Yakabuski: But never the member.

Mr. Bisson: But never the member; you can't say that.

But one of his points, and I spoke to this a little earlier, is the issue of the testing. I agree that testing is valuable. I agree that we should be testing kids to get a snapshot of where they're at. But one of the points I wanted to make earlier, and he alluded to it in his talk, is that I feel a fair number of teachers and schools are actually teaching to the test. There's a fair amount of preparation done by teachers to prepare the kids for the test. I can understand that, because we want to make sure that the school and the kids do well on those particular exams. But I'm not sure they're as valuable as we make them out to be, is the point I make. We went through this debate many years ago when we got rid of provincial testing, because we thought at the time—this was back in the late 1960s, early 1970s, when I was in school—that the value of grading kids on a provincial exam was not of a lot of worth, so we got rid of it. Now we've come back and done something not as strict or as rigid as we had when we were in school, but nonetheless, it's there. I just say on the issue of testing that I support the concept of the testing of kids but I'm not 100% convinced that, at the end of the day, it has the effect we want, which is to get that snapshot, because I believe we teach to the test.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I have to comment, because my good friend and colleague from Carleton—I still say Carleton though it's Lanark–Carleton—indicated a few

things that involved the procedures of the House as well as this bill. The parliamentary assistant informs me that you weren't entirely accurate in your evaluation of the bill, and she still allowed me to offer some comment.

First of all, I want to say to the member that it is always better, if we can, to resolve matters of how long we take on a bill through negotiations between the House leaders. An effort was made, I must say, on this particular bill once again to come to one of those agreements. It just didn't seem to be possible, remembering that all three parties in the House have to agree to it. But there was an honest effort on the part of the opposition and the government to try to come to a conclusion on this.

I must say that when we have allocated time, what we do consistently is that we allocate committee time. That wasn't always the case. Sometimes governments wanted to move expeditiously and didn't allow committee time. You'll notice that the time allocation motions for which our government has been responsible have put committee time in, and even third reading time. The member has been here long enough to know that there was a time when we didn't have third reading; it was on the nod. But these bills seem to go on forever. What's interesting is that this is one that has a consensus in the House and we still can't have an agreement to get it through in a timely fashion.

I want to say as well that we will give full consideration to the input that comes in committee. As to any amendments that are proposed, if they can improve the bill I'm sure the government would be prepared to accept them.

The last thing I would say is that the dangerous thing about this—it's a good thing I'm running out of time—is that I often find myself in agreement with my colleague from Lanark-Carleton on matters—but I've run out of time and I can't say where that agreement is.

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Mr. Yakabuski: I hope you will indulge me a little bit. In this time in the House I want to respond to the member from Lanark-Carleton, but I don't know if with two minutes I've got time to get too deeply in it.

The House has become a very partisan place of late because we're getting ready for an election and of course everybody is trying to set their stakes down in the ground. But I did want to take this opportunity—because you don't get that many opportunities—to say thank you to the Minister of Health for a particular situation that he helped me with and thereby helped a constituent of mine. I had a situation where it was determined by a family's medical people that a procedure that needed to be done would be best done at a particular place in the United States. I don't want to give too many details because I don't want to identify anybody. We met a bit of a block with the system, if you want to call it that. The matter was brought to my attention, and I took it personally to the Minister of Health. I must say that he reacted immediately, and his assistant Chris Farley-Ratcliffe was also very involved. I did want to take this opportunity, because this is a partisan place at times and we fail to

recognize sometimes how the place actually does work in a much better way to help us all. I would be remiss if I did not say in a public way that the minister intervened and helped us to a large degree and helped that family. To make a long story short, that procedure is now scheduled to be done in the United States, as was indicated would be best for the patient. I appreciate the help and the support of the minister on that matter.

Mr. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity. As I mentioned before, in listening to my colleague when he talks about his days, it's the same thing. This morning I was in two schools. I was at a high school—

Interjection.

Mr. Ouellette: No, no. But if you got in trouble, boy, you were afraid to come home and tell dad because you were more afraid of what happened at home, in the days when I went to school, than what happened at school. Part of it was that at that time the parents always, as the member mentioned, supported and backed up what took place in the school. But a lot of times now—I have a 10-year-old.

Interjection.

Mr. Ouellette: That's exactly it: You were more afraid of the discipline you got at home than at school. The parents backed up the teachers and the school and the system and that learning environment.

Now what we're doing is adding to the responsibilities in the school, having them take on more onus and responsibility. If you look at some of the sections, for example 310(1), where it speaks about how "A principal shall suspend a pupil if he or she believes that the pupil has engaged in any of the following ... or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school climate"—having an impact on the school climate. You're talking about Internet bullying, but there are so many other factors that, if I get a chance to debate later on, I'm going to try and bring forward. How much responsibility can you put on the schools and how are you going to police that? How are you going to look into those things? And what onus and responsibility do you then give the school? Quite frankly, we pass more on to them and we remove some of the responsibility from—it has to come back to the families, in some way, shape or form, in terms of what takes place in those particular situations.

I very much appreciate the comments and look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr. Sterling: Maybe I should seek unanimous consent to give the member for St. Catharines more time to talk about where he agrees with me.

I'd just like to use this opportunity to thank all the members who have commented with regard to my remarks. I always look forward to participating in changes to our education system, as there always will be changes. I stayed in our education system a long, long time: elementary school, high school, and I went to Carleton University for four years of engineering and to the

University of Ottawa for three years of law. I've been in school a lot of my life. I've got to tell you that I want at this time to thank not only all the people who were involved in my education but in my grandchildren's education and in the education of all young people across Ontario.

This is Education Week. Notwithstanding all the rules we set here, notwithstanding Bill 212 and all the other things, we must always rely on the trust we place in our teachers, our principals, our vice-principals and all the staff in our schools to take the best interests of our kids to heart. I believe they do that. I believe they do a tremendous job in the province of Ontario. We must always work with them to improve that system.

I think Bill 212 gives us the opportunity to go into other areas and look at tweaking the system we presently have. Therefore, I, along with members of my party, will be supporting this, so that we can give the system the opportunity to change, as it should, as time goes on.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I'm going to have an opportunity to add a couple of points to the debate that I, and I know many other members, are interested in; that is, praising the Minister of Health. No, no, I'm just joking there. He's not even listening. I was having fun with you, George.

I want to speak on two particular points of this bill. One of them is the issue of expulsion. This bill is certainly going in the right direction. I want to say at the outset that I'm going to support this initiative because I think it goes in the right direction—maybe not as much as some people would want, but when have we ever passed legislation around here where we got everything right? Generally, we're going in the right direction, and that is the issue for me.

One of the issues in this bill that is important is the process by which you can or can't expel a child or a young adult from school. I've always been of the view that kicking a kid out of school is, quite frankly, an admission of the failure of the system. It not only fails the child but I think it fails society in general.

I understand that teachers and principals and other kids sometimes are in a really tough spot with some kids in school who act out in a way that is disruptive in the classroom and that sometimes can be quite threatening to the students or the teacher. My future son-in-law, Chris Gardner, who is a teacher, is teaching up at Roland Michener presently. He had the good sense to meet my daughter and propose to her. I didn't have to put a shotgun to his head, so that's a good thing.

Interjections.

Mr. Bisson: Well, I'm a father. I'm allowed to say—I take that back. It's kind of in bad taste, but you know what I'm saying.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: No, she's not going to be happy. The point is that my daughter has made the right choice. Sometimes you have humour in things and it doesn't come out right. That didn't come out right, and I'm the first to admit it.

Anyway, my point is that he tells me, as other teachers across the system tell me, that at times there are kids who really act out, who have real big problems when it comes to the support they may not be getting at home, or sometimes they're getting the support at home but the child has difficulties, and the challenge that it presents to teachers. Teachers are hard pressed at times to have the kind of resources they need in order to support those kids, to try to move those kids through the system in a way that they can benefit at the end. I've always felt that in the end, throwing the child out of school as a way of dealing with a problem really only transfers the problem from the school to somewhere else in our society, and I think that doesn't serve any of us.

I want to talk specifically about a couple of cases, because I've had the opportunity, as other members in this House have, to deal with parents with children who have autism. Far too often, these kids are really the ones who are at risk. I wonder how many of the kids who are basically expelled from school come from the group of kids who have autism.

I'll go through a couple of cases, but I'm going to talk about one, first of all, just from memory. I was dealing with somebody in my own constituency whose child is now in grade 1. The child has autism and is not able to get the kind of support he needs in the classroom. They don't allow IBI therapy within the classroom, and this is something that is very much needed.

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We know by stats, for example, that kids who do get IBI therapy, who have an intensive behavioural therapist to work with them, by and large, succeed at a rate far greater than kids who don't get that kind of support. I have a particular instance in one of the schools in our community where the child needs IBI, and the school does not have the kind of support it needs to deal with this child. As a result, they asked that the child be withdrawn from the classroom. What does that do at the end of the day? Why not try as best we can to provide the type of support needed so that this child is able to develop and make the best life for the child? But the problem is that the school does not have the type of resources that it needs to provide the kind of service that child needs within the classroom.

The teacher's aides who are there to assist with the child, because there are teachers' aides in pretty well all of our schools, are not properly trained to deal with IBI. They are well meaning and they very much want to try to work hard. Certainly support specialists within schools do all they can to help kids, but dealing with kids with autism is a whole training in itself.

I just want to bring to the attention of the House a couple of cases that I was talking about to my colleague Shelley Martel, the member for Nickel Belt, earlier. One is the Downer family. The child's name is Joshua. I'm just going to read from the Peterborough Examiner, December 2, 2006, one story of one child. It says the following:

"Ruth-Ann and Sean Downer expected their four-year-old to start learning new things when he began junior kindergarten in September. They even expected to learn a few things themselves.

"But neither expected to learn the cost of ensuring their autistic son Joshua's education would be tearful exchanges with teachers, months of research and a game of hardball with administrators.

"After Joshua spent four days in a junior kindergarten class at Immaculate Conception School in East City ... the Downers were told to withdraw their son" from school.

"The teacher felt Joshua posed a safety threat when he tried to leave the classroom and there were too few resources to deal with him..."

It goes on to talk about what happened. The child was withdrawn from the school. In this particular case, the child wanted to leave the classroom—I don't know, to go to the washroom or whatever it might be—and the teacher didn't have the resources to deal with the child, and the child was having an episode. As a result of not having the resources to deal with Joshua, the child was withdrawn from school.

They were told, "Why don't you put your child in a private daycare if you need a place to bring him?" What an answer to give parents, for a school to tell the parents: "Rather than sending your kid to school like every other child, you're going to have to send your kid to a private daycare." It took them a couple of months to look at what they could do and how they're able to best serve their child. But it's quite telling because it's the story of what a lot of parents normally go through. I'll just read to the end of this.

"The Downers spent almost two months researching their rights, then November 22 at about midnight, they e-mailed a letter to the school board, politicians, the media and trustees.

"By 7:30 a.m. the next day," they got a call from the school board and by 9:30 a.m., there was a meeting set up to assess Joshua. Eventually, Joshua was returned to school.

These parents had to undergo a fair amount of stress, along with what it meant to Joshua himself, of having the child out of the school system because the school felt that they were not able to deal with the child, as they didn't have the support services to properly care for Joshua. The response was, "Let the child go home."

I just say to the government across the way that this is wrong. We need to support kids in school. One of the things that we need to do is to allow the intensive behavioural therapists into the schools so that they're able to deal with the child when they're having their episodes and to help train the teacher and teacher assistants, by way of example, in how to deal with the child. Eventually, the child is able to do better.

Again, I use the stats that I've read somewhere. The question was, if there are 100 kids in school under the current system of dealing with children with autism, what percentage of those kids who get minimal services, as are

presently given through our school boards, are going to succeed in the end? The number is somewhere around 25%. When we look at kids who are having therapy and are able to utilize IBI therapy, the number is closer to 50%. Clearly there is a correlation between providing the child with the type of support services they need for them to succeed.

I want to bring up another case, and this one is just as traumatic as the first one. The child's name in this case is Ian, and the grandparents are the caregivers for this child. I'm just going to read a little about what happened here. This is the grandparents writing the letter, John and April. It says, "Our grandson's education assistant attended a one-day seminar." So the training that the education assistant got to deal with young Ian was a one-day seminar getting him prepared to deal with the child as he came in. When the child got to school and was in his first day of school, "Within 30 minutes he was placed in a physical restraint by two adults. With a little more training and a little more understanding," that would never have needed to happen. The point is that the education assistant, not knowing how to deal with the child, felt that the only recourse was to restrain the child. "It was a big trigger when he was asked what he wanted to do." They're talking about the child. The child was asked by the teacher, "What would you like to do?" He said, "I would like to play with Play-Doh." The unfortunate reality is that two other kids were playing with the Play-Doh and there was no Play-Doh for him. As a result, the child was escorted—not pushed physically and hurt, but he was physically sort of corralled—towards another play area, and that child took it the wrong way and it caused an episode. As a result of the episode, the child was physically restrained by two adults in some sort of constraint, straps of some type.

Imagine a kid in their first 30 minutes in school, and the first experience of the school system is of that type. Clearly, that is not an experience that is going to bode well for the child.

As my good friend and colleague the member for Nickel Belt has been on for a long time, we need to get this government to hold to its promise in the last election; that is, first, to make sure we fund IBI therapy for kids over age six, and second, to make sure we provide the funding necessary for kids who need this type of support within the classroom. If they don't get it, the only people we're hurting in the end, besides the child, is ourselves as society. I think it speaks badly of what we're doing in the education system.

I want to say that overall our education system is a very good one. I don't want people to think for one second that I'm arguing that somehow or other teachers and schools and school boards aren't doing a great job. We have one of the best public education systems in the world. We have lots to be proud of. We have lots of good examples of success stories within our school system. It has served us well over the years and continues to serve us well and is made better as time goes by and as we start to learn. But there are certain areas where we're really

having difficulty, and one of those is the whole issue of giving services to children with special needs within the classroom. There is a long way to go. Far too often there's no diagnosis of the child's situation, and far too often the child is left unattended. A year, two years, three years go by, and finally, by the time we do the type of investigation that needs to be done to determine what the problem is with the child, we've lost valuable time, and as a result that child falls further and further behind. Obviously, one of the things we need to do better is the whole IPRC process where we identify children at risk, that we're able to properly assess them in a reasonable time so we can diagnose what the issue is for the child and then figure out what's the best way to deal with those children.

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I travel to and from the constituency of Timmins—James Bay every week by Air Ontario, being from Timmins, and other members who travel to Ottawa probably see the same thing I do. We have a number of children who travel on a regular basis from northern Ontario to provincial schools here in southern Ontario to the French system in Ottawa. Those kids have been identified as having special needs. We're not able to provide the service for those kids within our home school boards, so they're transported every week to a provincial school and back home every weekend. I've noted, over the years of travelling with these children, that some of these kids will be in the provincial school system for just a year, where they go to a special school to deal with their issues, and then they go back into the mainstream school at home. When I have come back into contact with these kids—because you're asked to speak at schools and you recognize one of the kids you've travelled with for a year on the aircraft—I see that those kids are doing well. There are some kids who tend to go longer. I know one young boy and one young girl who have been travelling at least three years, that I can think of, who have special needs in education. I can see already, over that time, that these kids are getting a lot better at coping with their situations and are able to excel, quite frankly, within the system afterwards. It shows that if you make those investments to support kids in their time of need, in the end that is something that will serve them well.

J'ai eu l'occasion—c'est une occasion que tu ne veux jamais avoir—mais quand même, c'est la situation où on se fait contacter dans nos bureaux de comté par des parents qui ont des problèmes dans le système d'éducation. Une des affaires qu'on voit assez souvent et qui est sérieuse dans le système, c'est l'incapacité du système de traiter les enfants et de donner du support aux enfants qui ont des difficultés d'apprentissage.

J'ai eu une situation dernièrement avec des parents dans la communauté de Hearst où ils ont essayé d'aller chercher auprès du conseil scolaire les services dont leurs enfants ont besoin dans le système. Pour des parents qui n'ont jamais eu l'occasion de revendiquer leur droit et le droit de leurs jeunes, des fois ce n'est ni apparent, ce n'est pas facile; des fois ils pensent qu'ils sont seuls et

qu'il n'y a personne d'autre qui est dans la situation avec eux, et des fois ils ne savent pas quoi demander au système scolaire ou aux élus. Ils ne savent pas quelles questions ils doivent poser, des fois.

Ça m'amène à ce point : qu'une chose qu'on a besoin de faire, c'est d'insister dans notre système sur faire donner l'information aux parents quand ils ont des problèmes avec le système scolaire. J'ai toujours pensé qu'on a besoin d'avoir—pas nécessairement un ombudsman—mais qu'on a besoin d'avoir quelque part où des parents ou des élèves peuvent appeler pour dire, « J'ai tel et tel problème. Quels sont mes droits? Quels programmes existent dans le système scolaire? Qui peut m'aider? À qui est-ce que je peux parler? » Parfois, ce qui arrive, c'est que les parents ont un problème avec le système d'éducation de leurs enfants, spécialement avec les soins spéciaux à l'école, et ce qui arrive, c'est qu'ils demandent aux professeurs et aux principaux—et possiblement à quelqu'un dans le système scolaire—et premièrement, des fois la personne à qui ils posent leurs questions ne sait pas qu'il y a un certain programme ou initiative pour les aider.

Numéro deux, les parents eux-mêmes ne savent pas quelles questions poser. Une des affaires qu'on a besoin de faire, c'est de trouver des spécialistes qu'on peut mettre dans le système scolaire—pas nécessairement dans chaque conseil, mais au moins pour avoir quelque part un central où les parents peuvent téléphoner et dire, « J'ai un problème avec mon enfant. Qu'est-ce que je peux faire? Qu'est-ce qui est disponible? » Là, ils auront au moins des avis de quelqu'un qui comprend le système d'éducation pour être capable de les envoyer dans la bonne direction, et ils auront aussi quelqu'un qui peut les représenter pour les aider et qui est capable de développer la solution nécessaire pour leurs jeunes dans le système scolaire.

Le dernier point que je veux faire, c'est dans la question des tests obligatoires. Ce n'est pas toujours apparent que le système de tests obligatoires, à la fin de la journée, est aussi valable qu'on le pense. Est-ce que ça fait du bon sens de faire des tests aux jeunes pour savoir où ils en sont? Oui. Est-ce qu'on doit faire des tests? Je pense que ce n'est pas une méchante idée, mais est-ce que la valeur de ces tests est exactement aussi bonne qu'on la pense? Je pense que la réponse est « non ». Ce qui est arrivé, quand nous allions au système d'éducation dans les années 1960 et 1970 : on avait des examens obligatoires qu'on écrivait à la fin de l'année pour le secondaire. En neuvième et dixième, pour aller en treizième année, on écrivait un test et on avait besoin de passer un standard provincial. Ça fait des années, et on a pu demander que ces tests-là soient faits.

Au moins avec des tests provinciaux, on avait le sens que le jeune avait appris ce qu'il était supposé d'apprendre, parce que, ce qu'il était supposé d'apprendre était sur ses tests. On était capable de voir si le jeune avait avancé au degré qu'il avait besoin.

Le seul problème avec ce système-là, c'est qu'on apprend qu'il y a un problème seulement à la fin de

l'année. On a besoin de trouver une manière d'identifier le problème avant, afin d'être capable de faire des corrections et d'aider les jeunes à avancer. Ce qui arrive avec nos tests qu'on fait comme cela, nos tests provinciaux : ce ne sont pas des examens, mais seulement des tests pour avoir un peu un « snapshot », une idée de jusqu'à quel point le système scolaire répond aux besoins des jeunes.

Le point que j'ai fait plus tôt et que je veux faire dans ce débat dans le temps qui reste, c'est que les professeurs préparent les jeunes pour les tests afin d'être capables de passer. Ce n'est pas nécessairement du mal, c'est ce que les profs sont supposés de faire, mais à quel point est-ce que ça nous donne quelque chose? Ce qu'on sait, c'est que les profs ont fait une bonne job à préparer les jeunes et les jeunes ont bien fait dans leurs tests. C'est ça que

cela nous dit. Mais à la fin de la journée, est-ce que ça nous donne vraiment un portrait de l'instance de ce jeune-là dans sa vie scolaire? Je pense que la réponse est « non ». On a besoin de revisiter cette question-là pour voir de quelle manière on est capable de faire un « assessment » d'à quel point les jeunes sont rendus qui nous donne vraiment le sens : est-ce que le jeune a été bien formé? Je ne suis pas trop convaincu qu'à la fin de la journée, on le fait avec le système présent.

Merci pour m'avoir donné ce temps de parler avec vous ce soir.

The Acting Speaker: The time now being 9.30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2126.

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Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 1 May 2007

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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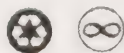
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I rise today to draw attention to the questionable spending of taxpayer dollars by the McGuinty government in their apparent rush to dish out millions of dollars in undocumented and unconditional year-end spending.

In addition to the lack of clear process and apparent absence of accountability in the distribution of these large year-end grants by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, many of the successful organizations appear to have close ties with the Liberal Party.

It's unfortunately not surprising that in an effort to defend against this latest scandal, the Premier himself has suggested that questioning by the members on this side of the House is motivated by racism.

It is not our integrity that is in question. What's questionable here is the Liberal government's apparent disregard for accountability to Ontario's taxpayers. With the minister refusing to produce the documentation to support the government's choice of recipients, we are left to assume that there is no process here and that the only criteria that must be met for an organization to receive a grant are to have Liberal Party ties or to provide some sort of benefit for the upcoming election.

Whatever the political criteria, it's apparent that the objective is to buy votes rather than ensure that a transparent system is in place. The money appears to be going to marginal ridings that Liberals think they can win or are worried about losing in the next election. No money is going to groups in Parry Sound–Muskoka. These organizations simply do not provide enough of a political benefit to warrant receiving one of the Liberal slush fund grants.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise today to speak about a very unique musical play about schoolyard bullying, titled *Recess*, which I saw this past weekend. I was so impressed by these young people, ages seven

to 15, as they participated in this creative venture about a topic faced daily in our schools.

I know the McGuinty government has worked hard to create safe school environments and incorporate anti-bullying legislation. It's an important message that will keep our children safe and give them opportunities to grow and flourish without having to face discrimination.

Recess was written, produced and directed by Hamilton's own Colin Leversidge. The play sheds light on the situations kids deal with on a daily basis and has been compared to a social studies lesson. The musical production embraces diversity, multiculturalism, individuality, community and friendship, all taught through monologues, comedy, song and dance.

Our applause goes to Grace Grafham, Emma Grafham, Halle Leversidge, Melissa Halliwell, Peter Vardy and Julia Bobiak, who all were soloists in the production. The performance was a fundraiser put on by the Rotary Club, and also featured a performance by the Hamilton All Star Junior Jazz Band. These two groups came together through the Downtown Cultural Arts Centre, one of Hamilton's treasures. It is bringing new life to our downtown core and provides new opportunities for our local artists.

When three extraordinary organizations such as the Rotary Club, the children's aid society, which was the beneficiary of this fine fundraiser, and the Downtown Cultural Arts Centre collaborate on such an important topic as bullying, I'm sure the message will be heard all across Hamilton.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today to talk about the regrettable state of gutter politics that Dalton McGuinty fully endorses. He and his slush fund Minister of Citizenship have sunk so low as to accuse members of both opposition parties of being racists in an attempt to cover up their own lack of accountability. He should apologize, but we won't hold our breath. As the old saying goes, garbage rolls downhill, so it's no wonder that his ministers and members are following along.

The member from Nipissing and her colleagues put forward a non-committal motion last week that directly targets the recipients of the minister's slush fund. Dalton McGuinty endorsed vicious and personal attacks during the Parkdale–High Park by-election by Minister Pupa-

tello. Minister Bartolucci peered out of the gutter just long enough in this very place to utter something that I refuse to repeat—gutter politics, and the hits just keep on coming.

Last night, it reached a new low. Minister Watson, who knows full well that a dear relative of my colleague from Nepean—Carleton has been a recent patient at the Regional Cancer Centre in Ottawa, sank to a new low in personal attacks and gutter politics when he suggested that my colleague from Nepean—Carleton has anything but full support for the amazing work of the Regional Cancer Centre there. Will the minister apologize? We won't hold our breath, but he should.

The hard-working people of Ontario know that Dalton McGuinty will resort to any tactic. When it comes to John Tory's credibility, honesty, accountability and true leadership in Ontario or Dalton McGuinty's gutter politics—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Colon cancer patients at Queen's Park today denounced the McGuinty Liberal government for failing to pay for the cancer treatment they need: Avastin, a drug approved by Health Canada and recommended by Cancer Care Ontario.

Joaquim Teotonio has already paid \$40,000 for injections at a private clinic in Toronto. He says, "It should be plain for all to see.... It's bad enough to have this terrible disease without having to worry about drug accessibility."

John Colacci has been told by the Trillium Health Centre that the hospital will provide Avastin to him at a cost of \$36,000. He says, "I expect more from this Ontario government, not just for me but for every other Ontarian who could encounter this problem."

Wendy Mundell paid \$18,000 up front for Avastin last year and was lucky to receive some financial assistance afterwards from a third-party benefit package. She asks, "Why doesn't this government agree that my life is worth \$18,000?"

Roman Gawur has just begun treatment and will be forced to pay \$32,000 to receive Avastin at the Trillium Health Centre. He says, "This is two-tier health.... I am paying a hospital for the injection of a medically necessary drug."

It's time this government paid for cancer treatments recommended by Cancer Care Ontario. It is unacceptable that the McGuinty Liberals are forcing Ontarians to pay for treatment themselves or go without. No one in Ontario should ever have to face this choice; no one should. It's time this government paid for these treatments.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's my privilege to request recognition of a number of young people from across Ontario who are with us in the House today. These

young people represent 14 different communities that have been designated as youth-friendly by Play Works. Play Works is a group of provincial organizations whose goal is to see that adolescent youth have more opportunities to participate in affordable, accessible play activities such as the arts, volunteerism, sports, drama, leadership, dance and youth activism. These 14 communities have worked very hard to make their youth feel valued, respected and worthy of play opportunities that help them with their social and personal development. I'm particularly pleased to introduce these young people, as my constituency is one of 14 to be recognized.

1340

In Peterborough we've worked especially hard to invite our young people to be engaged in what goes on in our community. We have the KAOS radio station, which has a specified youth focus, a youth volunteer of the year award, and an incredible youth council that offers some great programs such as the youth art show and sale.

I could go on, as I'm so proud, as should all the 14 communities be that are being recognized today. Since Play Works started recognizing youth-friendly communities in 2005, 22 communities in Ontario have been designated youth-friendly. I would encourage my colleagues to work with their groups and local government so that Ontario can continue to grow as a youth-friendly province.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds—Grenville): My comments are related to the McGuinty government's multi-million dollar political slush fund.

Today I want to put on the record the opposition's growing concerns about the way in which the government has closed off all avenues that would allow the public to know what happened to their hard-earned tax dollars shovelled out the door to Liberal-friendly organizations.

For the past week and a half, this slush fund scandal has dominated question period. The efforts of both opposition parties to elicit answers to legitimate questions have been met with obfuscation and scurrilous attempts to smear questioners and their parties. The attempt by opposition parties to have the public accounts committee call in the auditor to review these grants and the processes used to determine who qualified for under-the-table monies was also rebuffed by the Liberal majority.

Yesterday, an opposition motion providing details of the scandal and calling on the government to bring in the auditor was voted down by Liberal members, and once again Liberal members participating in the debate resorted to gutter politics, which is increasingly symptomatic of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

If this obstructionist approach continues, Mr. Speaker, I put you and government members on notice that we will utilize all tools available to respond to this blatant

attempt by the McGuinty government to keep the truth hidden from the people of Ontario.

RAILWAY ASSOCIATION ASSOCIATION FERROVIAIRE

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): First, I would like to welcome the Canadian railway association, Ontario chapter, who are joining us today.

Today we are fortunate to have with us Ontario's representatives from the Railway Association of Canada to recognize and celebrate Ontario's railway ties. The railway association's 23 Ontario-based members own and operate close to 12,000 kilometres of track and move more than 90 million revenue tonne kilometres of freight, bringing more than 40% of Ontario goods to market. Short-line railways link Ontario communities of all sizes to the world's markets. Furthermore, the Railway Association of Canada's Ontario members create close to 10,000 direct jobs and indirectly support tens of thousands more.

Rail not only plays an important role in Ontario's economy, but is also an important part of the solution for reducing GHG emissions and ensuring a vibrant and healthy environment for all Ontarians.

J'encourage tous mes collègues et leurs employés à saisir l'occasion de célébrer les liens importants que la voie ferrée maintient avec notre superbe province, en venant à la réception de l'Association des chemins de fer du Canada ce soir dans la salle 230, entre 17 h 30 et 19 h 30.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I rise today to discuss how our government's hospital renewal program, which is the largest in Ontario's history, is benefiting our local communities. The previous government left us with an enormous infrastructure deficit regarding our hospitals that left local communities desperate for help. This government has listened and we are delivering ambitious infrastructure projects that will revitalize a system under strain.

The McGuinty Liberals are working to overturn years of neglect. We have a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan that includes more than \$5 billion in health care infrastructure projects. Our government has already approved more than 65 major hospital projects, and today I would like to highlight some of them.

In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, we are delivering a redeveloped St. Joseph's Complex Continuing Care Centre, and the early works project of the Cornwall Community Hospital is under way. Plans are progressing for the redevelopment of the Winchester District Memorial Hospital in North Dundas.

Things are looking up. In the good city of Barrie, the expansion of the hospital around the new cancer centre is

expected to add more than 50 hospital beds. Our government recently communicated that Barrie will also receive approval for 101 new beds. This means better care for Barrie families. People will be able to get health care with more dignity and respect.

The Tories sat by for years and ignored the calls from the Royal Victoria Hospital and the local community that further hospital expansion was needed to accommodate a growing population in Barrie.

The McGuinty Liberals are there for the good people of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh and Barrie. My friend Aileen Carroll knows the work that we have done for her community—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise in the House today to speak about the wonderful accomplishments that have occurred in our Barrie area schools as a result of this government's investments and the hard work of our local teachers, school boards, parents, trustees and students.

By working together, the good people of Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford have achieved some great results. For the first time in 16 years, students applying to college and university got their education without having to experience lost learning days as a result of labour action.

Obviously, that is something the Tories can't speak to. Under their government, schools crumbled, students were left out of the classroom and kids had to go without textbooks. The Tories' top-down, slash-and-burn approach to education left our public schools struggling.

Since the McGuinty Liberals came to office, we have invested almost \$1,800 per student in the Simcoe County District School Board. That's a 25% increase in funding for our children. Similar investments have also been made in the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board.

While the Tories let our schools crumble, we have provided \$820,000 for the Bradford District High School to replace their roofs. This is just one example of how we are making their learning experience better.

Class sizes are smaller, there are more teachers, and test scores are up more than 10%. Parents and children are now reaping the benefits of a government dedicated to the education of children. The people of Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford deserve nothing less.

VISITORS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Ontario members of the Railway Association of Canada are visiting Queen's Park today to celebrate Ontario's railway ties.

I would like to introduce you to Mr. Cliff Mackay, president and CEO of the Railway Association of Canada. He is up in this area. He is accompanied by many representatives of member companies in the RAC. I

would like to welcome them all to Queen's Park, especially Mr. James Allen, general manager of the Ottawa Central Railway, who is up there.

I would also like to encourage all of the members in this Legislature to attend their reception this evening in committee room 230, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to welcome into the gallery my mother and father, Frances and Bev Watson, and an aunt and uncle from Toronto, Marlene and Ron Masleck as well today.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I ask for unanimous consent to put forth a motion without notice regarding the membership of certain committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that the following change, effective immediately, be made to the membership of the following committee: On the standing committee on general government, Mr. Racco replaces Mr. Peterson.

The Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business:

Mr. Milloy and Ms. Mossop exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Milloy assumes ballot item 16 and Ms. Mossop assumes ballot item 7; Mr. Gravelle and Mr. Mauro exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Gravelle assumes ballot item 68 and Mr. Mauro assumes ballot item 14; Mr. Ferreira and Ms. Martel exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Ferreira assumes ballot item 9 and Ms. Martel assumes ballot item 74; and that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 8.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet

from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 1, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 336. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldir	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mossop, Jennifer F.	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Murdoch, Bill
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ferreira, Paul	Martel, Shelley	Yakubuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	
Horwath, Andrea	Miller, Norm	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 22.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would bring the attention of the House to guests in the Speaker's gallery. We have the former mayor of Espanola, Marcel Rancourt, and his wife, Evelyn.

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome a fine school from Hamilton, Hillfield Strathallen College. They are in the visitors' gallery right now with their teachers Mr. Dalton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Vedelago and Mr. Levy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome in the members' gallery east the former federal minister of

international trade and the former federal member for Barrie and future MPP for Barrie, Aileen Carroll.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION RELATIVE À L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education):

This morning, I had the opportunity to visit Earl Haig Secondary School in Willowdale with my colleague Laurel Broten, Minister of the Environment. This school is a great example of the difference students and teachers can make to improve our environment. This certified ecoschool has developed an efficient and well-run recycling program that students have embraced. Last year, they launched Operation Litterbug to encourage students to reduce the amount of school waste. And they're planning to plant four trees on the west side of the school that will help cool several classrooms on hot summer days with shade instead of air-conditioning.

I have no doubt that teachers at this school will continue to inspire and educate students for decades about the environment, and today's Earl Haig students will become tomorrow's leaders and innovators on climate change.

But our government wants to go further. We want to help teachers and students build on the knowledge and leadership already shown on climate change issues.

Nous souhaitons diffuser les exemples d'efforts valables déployés par des écoles comme Earl Haig dans toute la province.

The McGuinty government is committed to reaching every student with an environmental education that inspires them to take positive action. We will do this by building better links between the education system and environmental organizations and leaders.

This morning, I was very pleased to make an announcement with Geoff Cape, executive director of Evergreen. Evergreen is a wonderful, non-profit environmental organization committed to creating and sustaining healthy, dynamic outdoor spaces. Evergreen is thrilled to be administering a \$500,000 grant from the Ministry of Education to support the growth and expansion of the Ontario EcoSchools program. Ontario EcoSchools is an environmental education program that addresses both how the schools are run and what students learn. It's been designed by school boards to incorporate environmental education as well as environmentally responsible action into the school setting. Evergreen has been a partner in the EcoSchools program since its inception and has been responsible for the development of its school ground greening component. The overall goal of EcoSchools is student success in both academics and positive contributions to society. There are currently 107 certified

EcoSchools at six boards in Ontario, and they've made a positive impact on thousands of students.

I'm very pleased that the EcoSchools program will continue to expand with the help of community partners like Evergreen. This morning, my colleague Minister of the Environment Laurel Broten announced the launch of two youth-focused websites: www.obviously.ca for secondary students, and www.ontario.ca/ezone for elementary students. They were created to explain the challenges facing our planet and inspire students to take actions that protect the environment, all within an interactive media experience that includes music clips and videos. The websites are all about encouraging and mobilizing young people. We're sending the message to youth that by taking collective action to conserve energy and reduce their environmental footprint, they can make a difference in combating climate change. This is another way that Ontario is educating, engaging and inspiring Ontario's next generation of environmental leaders.

We also recently launched a working group on environmental education led by Dr. Roberta Bondar, and Catherine Mahler, EcoSchools' project coordinator, is part of that group that Roberta Bondar is leading.

We asked Dr. Bondar and her group to look at our curriculum and provide advice to our curriculum council on how the environment and conservation are being taught in elementary and secondary schools and how we can strengthen both of those. We recognize that it's important for our students—our future leaders—to learn about and have a strong understanding of the environment, climate change and the importance of conservation.

Evergreen, EcoSchools, the Ministry of the Environment and the curriculum council: We're working with all of them to help ensure that students get the best environmental education possible. Together, we're ensuring that students receive a high-quality education that's relevant to a rapidly changing world.

Ensemble, nous appuyons chaque élève.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I rise today to inform members that northerners have seized the opportunities offered under the government's northern prosperity plan with gratifying results.

Yesterday, I, along with my colleagues, had the pleasure of releasing our government's first progress report on the northern prosperity plan. It has been nearly three years since we launched the plan, which weaves together a range of provincial initiatives for the north and for Ontario's mineral sector.

The plan was and continues to be an ambitious one, given that our region is more than 800,000 square kilometres in size. Moreover, our programs and initiatives under the plan are aimed at dealing head-on with issues that have challenged our northern communities for years.

There are encouraging signs of progress. With the help and hard work of northerners and mineral sector partners, significant results are being achieved.

Support for the private sector is creating new and sustainable jobs. Indicators of diversity and new business opportunities are appearing. Since March 2006, northern Ontario has gained 18,400 net new jobs.

Young entrepreneurs and students are finding new opportunities to build careers and expand their experiences. We're seeing the lowest youth unemployment in seven years. We're also seeing the tide of youth out-migration start to turn, and some northern communities are seeing population growth for the first time in a long time.

The northern Ontario heritage fund has created or sustained over 7,700 jobs through more than 1,000 projects since October 2003. Record infrastructure investments, including more than \$1.3 billion for northern highways since 2003, are improving transportation corridors, providing clean drinking water and enhancing broadband and telecommunications connectivity.

A three-year, \$15-million geological mapping initiative and cluster development are driving innovation and exploration in a thriving minerals sector.

Through the GO North investor program in 2006-07, \$5 million was budgeted for international marketing efforts that are promoting northern investment opportunities to the world.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is educating a new generation of doctors, driving research opportunities and breaking new ground in telemedicine and distance education. Students who began their medical training in 2005 when the school opened are about to begin the year-long community placement component of their education, working and living in the northern communities it is hoped many will return to when they begin their careers.

Yesterday, in releasing the progress report, four of my northern caucus colleagues and I had the pleasure of connecting with community, business and educational leaders in six communities across the north by video-conference. This event belonged not to us but to northern partners who have told us how the northern prosperity plan was working for them.

1410

In North Bay, we heard from Mr. Ken Perrin from Rotacan, a manufacturer of rotary drill bits for the mining industry that has expanded with the help of the northern Ontario heritage fund.

In Thunder Bay, Janet Northan, director of cancer research innovation and planning from the Northwestern Ontario Regional Cancer Centre, spoke of the emerging health services and research synergies occurring in the region. Mr. Tom Meilleur, chief operating officer of NAC Air, gave us an overview of the successful expansion they have undertaken with the province's help.

In Sault Ste Marie, Mr. Mike Rosso, plant manager of Flakeboard, outlined his melamine lamination plant's latest innovations.

Mr. Mark Jensen, director of development services for the city of Timmins, spoke about some of the city's infrastructure projects, all supported by important provincial initiatives.

From Sudbury, we heard from Mr. Brian Beaton, services coordinator for K-Net First Nations Telehealth, based in Sioux Lookout, as well as Laurentian University's president, Dr. Judith Woodsworth, whose institution plays an ever-growing role in mining research and excellence.

I would like to once again thank yesterday's guests, as well as those who attended the videoconference. I would especially like to thank Mrs. Sylvia Barnard, president of Cambrian College in Sudbury, who hosted the event.

The testimonials from across the north represent the hundreds and hundreds of partnerships struck through the northern prosperity plan over the past three years. We thank all of our partners for doing their part to strengthen the north and Ontario's mineral sector. Their contributions put a face to northern progress and reminded all of us that the north's most precious resource is its people. They eloquently demonstrated that northerners are collaborating as never before across industry, academia and all levels of government to achieve shared goals. My northern caucus colleagues and I are proud that our government's plan for building prosperity in the north has been a catalyst for new initiatives in community and economic development projects across northern Ontario and in the province's mineral sector.

There is one more group of people I'd like to thank. The day-to-day work of developing and managing the programs under the northern prosperity plan is carried out by public service staff from my ministry, often in coordination with other ministries across government. Staff from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines are truly dedicated individuals. Their knowledge and experience of the north and their passion for its success are invaluable. Our government appreciates their work very much.

Yes, issues will continue to be a challenge, and, yes, there is still much work to do. We acknowledge that. But northerners are hard-working people and they have set their sights on a brighter, more prosperous future for their families and for their communities. Our government will continue to work alongside them every step of the way.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

L'hon. Christopher Bentley (ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités): C'est avec plaisir que je prends la parole aujourd'hui devant l'Assemblée législative afin de parler de l'investissement du gouvernement McGuinty visant à offrir davantage de possibilités innovatrices aux étudiants et étudiantes postsecondaires d'art et de design en Ontario.

Établi depuis plus de 100 ans, l'Ontario College of Art and Design, également appelé OCAD, est devenu le plus grand établissement d'enseignement postsecondaire du Canada spécialisé en art et design. Il offre à ses quelque 3 000 étudiants et étudiantes un cadre d'apprentissage unique qui associe un enseignement expérientiel en studio à l'étude des arts libéraux.

I'm pleased to tell the House today about the McGuinty government's investment to create more innovative opportunities for post-secondary art and design students in Ontario. Established more than 100 years ago, the Ontario College of Art and Design, also known as OCAD, has grown to become Canada's largest post-secondary institution specializing in art and design. Today, OCAD has more than 3,000 students, and they enjoy a one-of-a-kind learning environment that combines an experiential, studio-based education with liberal studies.

As a result of this long, successful history, more and more students are turning to the institution to pursue their post-secondary art and design studies. A record number of students have found opportunity at OCAD and in all of our colleges and universities; in fact, 86,000 more students than when we started, and now we are opening doors to previously unimagined opportunities for Ontario students.

Case in point: Earlier today, I attended a celebration at OCAD to announce a new annual investment by the McGuinty government in the new digital futures initiative. Starting with a \$1-million investment last year, rising to \$2 million this year and carrying on in all subsequent years, this new program builds on OCAD's leadership in art and design education by giving students the opportunity to create new interactive services and products using innovative design methods in digital media technology. This funding will help OCAD develop curriculum and hire new faculty, as well as purchase the necessary technology and digital learning resources needed to make the initiative a success.

The digital futures initiative is being guided by an advisory board that brings together private sector partners as well as other colleges and universities. Partner post-secondary institutions will facilitate the entry of students from other programs and develop joint courses, graduate studies and research. Industry partners, such as software, graphic design and interactive game companies, will ensure the curriculum leads industry needs as well as providing students with work-study experiences. Through partnerships, the initiative will develop applications for industry in the communications, new media, advertising, technology, finance, health care, tourism, entertainment and service sectors.

Students, for example, will develop tourism-based information that is linked to global positioning systems. This technology, which was recently implemented in Banff National Park, allows visitors to the park to retrieve natural history information through their cell-phones or other electronic devices.

By supporting the digital futures initiative, we will not only provide more higher education opportunities for our students but also produce the highly innovative knowledge workers who will ensure that Ontario remains a leading design and cultural industry centre in North America.

The McGuinty government understands the value of investing in the creative potential of Ontarians. That's

why we've increased OCAD's budget by 28% since 2004-05. We know that our \$18-million investment in OCAD this year will not only help OCAD students get a better education but will underpin the future prosperity of our economy by introducing new design and technology into many aspects of everyday life. This funding builds on our government's \$4.2-billion investment in new faculty, library acquisitions and student services at all colleges and universities.

Under the \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan, funding to colleges and universities is increasing by 35% over five years. The results are in: Reaching Higher has been a huge success. As a result of the plan, the people of Ontario are not only seeing improved access—86,000 more students than when we started—but also higher quality in the province's post-secondary education system.

Our government is investing three new dollars for every \$1 students are asked to contribute to their education. In comparison, annual government funding for post-secondary education went down from 1991 to 2003, while tuition went up. That's why we established the new arm's-length Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to monitor quality in the sector and encourage greater accountability at colleges and universities.

We've also established three-year agreements with colleges and universities to not only give the institutions the stability they need to plan for the future but also set individual targets to improve student access to education as well as the quality of the student experience.

You can be sure that the record number of students accessing Ontario's colleges and universities are getting a higher-quality education compared to the system this government inherited.

1420

But more than that, in either of our official languages, we've made sure that education is more affordable for students who were squeezed by a frozen and neglected student aid system. We're doubling our investment in student aid to help more families with the cost of higher education by ensuring that the most aid goes to the students who need it the most. Students are now eligible for \$2,550 more in assistance, a 27% increase, for a total of \$11,900 in maximum annual assistance—after an 11-year freeze.

We're providing three times as many non-repayable grants to 120,000 students this year compared to 2003-04, and we've limited student debt for 80,000 students who are eligible for loans of more than \$7,000 a year but only have to repay that amount. We're also providing 60,000 up-front tuition grants for low- to middle-income students this year. These grants were reintroduced by the government in 2005-06.

Our goal from the start has been to encourage all Ontarians to pursue higher education and enhance skills so they're prepared for the jobs of the future. Our province's economic strength depends upon access to high-quality post-secondary education and training, which is why we're helping students, through opportunities like the

digital futures initiative at OCAD, to gain the skills that will last a lifetime.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of John Tory, the leader of the official opposition, and the PC caucus, I want to affirm our support for environmental education as an integral part of the curriculum of our education system in Ontario and our support for the ongoing effort to increase environmental awareness in our students. But we see this announcement for what it is: a valiant effort at damage control following the release of the offensive environmental campaign launched last week by her colleague the Minister of the Environment.

The education minister can rest assured that it will take more than a couple of new websites to make Ontarians forget the insulting affront to community standards represented by her colleague's Flick Off campaign. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. The Minister of Labour will come to order. The member for Halton will come to order. I need to be able to hear the member make his response. The member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: In fact, we want the Minister of Education to tell us what she thinks of that highly offensive ad campaign that targets students as young as 13 years of age. Parents, teachers and principals would also like to know why the Minister of Education has been so silent in the face of the Flick Off campaign that has caused consternation in our schools in communities across this province.

What message does the McGuinty Liberal government send to our students when our government resorts to the basest of means to make a point and throws public standards of decency out the window? How does this square with character education, I ask the minister? Where was the Minister of Education when the Flick Off ad campaign was being pushed through cabinet? Why didn't the Minister of Education veto that outrageously offensive attempt to reach our youth? Why didn't she stand up for students, teachers and parents, and common decency, as a member of cabinet and protest what the vast majority of Ontarians consider an all-time low for the McGuinty government?

Teachers and parents are telling me that the McGuinty Liberal Flick Off ad campaign belongs in the gutter or at the very least should be confined to the Liberal Cabinet Office. It's offensive to the broader community and the entire environmental movement and the cause of environmental education.

Parents and teachers want and deserve an apology from the Premier, from his environment minister and also from this education minister, who should have learned in grade 12 literature class, in the play by Robert Bolt, *A Man For All Seasons*, that silence gives consent.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Quite frankly, I'm surprised he's doing his statement on northern prosperity today, when the first newspaper I picked up on the weekend, the Sault Star, Saturday April 28, talks about another mill, Boniferro Mill Works Inc., a four-year, Sault-based hardwood mill operator, shutting down. The news is always bad, it seems, out of the north, and a lot of it is brought about by this government.

I was at a reception just recently when the Minister of Northern Development and Mines surprised the people from De Beers. I read some press releases from De Beers. Here we have a quote: "The diamond royalty, as proposed in yesterday's Ontario provincial budget, has not previously been covered in any dialogue between the industry and the Ontario government.... We are concerned about these apparently arbitrary changes to the tax structure so close to the start of production at Victor." It goes on and on. I know the minister was there at the Meet the Miners reception, and he very much surprised De Beers that day by saying they had been consulted with, and of course, he didn't consult with them at all about this new tax which is very much going to hurt the De Beers mining project so that this may be the last diamond mine that ever opens in Ontario.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We support the \$2 million in funding that the government is extending to the Ontario College of Art and Design for their digital futures program. But government must also address the concern of many in the cultural industries that cultural workers will not be able to find jobs in Ontario when they do graduate. The film industry in Ontario is particularly concerned that Ontario is losing its competitive advantage. This government clearly has no cultural strategy to make Ontario into a centre of excellence for the film, television and new technologies—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Northern Development at trying to spin what is a northern prosperity plan in northern Ontario. I find it somewhat interesting that the minister, yesterday in northern Ontario, tried to spin that all the news is well in northern Ontario. He talks about places like Thunder Bay, where recently we know that the Smurfit-Stone containerboard mill was shut down. We know that Abitibi Consolidated-Stone, Cascades paper—and now that we know that Great West Timber sawmill is going to be

down, it's four mills that are going down in Thunder Bay alone. The list is: Kenora, Fort Frances, Terrace Bay, White River, Opasatika, Chapleau, Kirkland Lake, Timmins—the list goes on, Mr. Minister. They're not creating jobs in northern Ontario. We're losing jobs in northern Ontario when it comes to the forest industry.

Now the government gets up and says, "Look at the wonderful job we're doing in mining." Thank God for gold prices and thank God for base metal prices, because if it weren't for that, we'd be in another fiasco like you created in forestry.

But they couldn't leave well enough alone. My colleague the critic from the Conservative Party talked about the De Beers diamond mining project. This government, by way of this budget, has introduced a measure that will do more to scare investment out of Ontario when it comes to mining investment in this province than we've seen in the last 25 years. We know that as a result of this measure, if accepted—and I'm hoping, and I say to you, Minister, tell the members on your committee that you're going to defeat it, and support our amendments in the Legislature defeating your proposal to change the royalty structure for De Beers, because that in the end is going to do more to scare investment out of Ontario and not allow the good-paying jobs that could be created, because of this government's action.

Northern prosperity plan? We don't need more of it in northern Ontario. What we need is a change of government.

1430

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I rise to speak to the issue of ecoschools. The first thing I want to do is praise the boards and the students who have done so much work to develop the EcoSchools program.

Secondly, I want to quote the environment minister: "Climate change is the challenge of our generation." It's one thing to say something like that; the other thing is to act.

Three ministers of education ago, \$275 million was promised to be spent by this government to leverage \$4 billion in school renovation. To date, only \$25 million has been spent, and the schools are still crumbling. Where are the investments in energy efficiency? Where are the investments in renewable power? Where are the investments in water efficiency?

In my riding, ecoschools invest in green roofs by holding bake sales and raising money. They aren't getting support from the board; they're not getting support from the province. Where are the programs to not only teach students but also protect them and their future from climate change? This is a government that is signalling it will do a John Baird: announce half measures on climate change and declare them a Kyoto-compliant plan, if this was 1997. Our children need to learn a lot about climate change, because this government is going to give them a lot of it.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I want to quote Minister Bentley when he said, "The results are in." He's right: The results are in. Students are getting whacked this year with a 5% tuition increase, and they are going to get whacked—should they be re-elected, God forbid—with another 5% increase next year, and then another 5% increase after that, and then another 5% increase after that. The results are in: Debts now, on average, are \$25,000 for students going into a regular program. If you happen to be in law or medicine, your tuition fees alone are anywhere from \$14,000, \$15,000 to \$17,000, \$18,000 per year and the debts for those students are anywhere from \$70,000 to \$150,000. That's how they get whacked. It's true: The results are in. Ninety percent of students have no access to grants and they're going to have to go to the banks and get money right away. We are number 10 in terms of funding, or maybe number nine. That's how great we are. The wealthiest province in Canada and we are number nine in terms of funding. The results are in, Minister.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for this House's assistance and participation in the 2007 Daisy of Hope campaign, the public awareness campaign and education targeting domestic violence. The campaign is to happen during the month of May. The Daisy of Hope campaign was initiated by Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services in Brantford in 1999.

I ask for unanimous consent that the daisy be worn for the month of May.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Levac has asked that the daisy be worn for the month of May. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm also seeking unanimous consent. Sudbury is electrified with excitement and percolating with pride, because the Sudbury Wolves are in the Ontario Hockey League final. This is the first time in many years that there is an international component. The Sudbury Wolves are playing the Plymouth Whalers from Michigan. So today, I ask for unanimous consent for everyone in this House to wear our "Go, Wolves, Go" button for the entire playoffs.

The Speaker: Mr. Bartolucci has asked for unanimous consent to wear the "Go, Wolves, Go" button. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Mr. Speaker, I just want to support the honourable minister across the way for the Sudbury Wolves, but what we need is to keep the Liberal wolves away from northern Ontario jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Duncan has asked for unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on Sexual Assault Prevention Month. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): I would like to bring to the attention of the Legislature an important initiative called the Daisy of Hope campaign. The Daisy of Hope campaign was started by Brantford's Nova Vita women's services in 1999 to promote violence-free living for all women and children and support women's shelters' efforts in ending domestic violence. The representative from Brantford, MPP Dave Levac, has been a long-time supporter of these agencies in his hometown. We're very impressed that that campaign has become province-wide. Special congratulations to him.

All across Ontario, citizens will be wearing this pin to acknowledge the important work of women's shelters. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to wear the daisy of hope pin throughout the month of May to recognize the contributions of women's shelters and to show our joint commitment in ending all forms of violence against women.

May is also Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. This is a time to renew our shared commitment to ending sexual violence against women. Sexual assault can be devastating. Less than 10% of all sexual assaults are actually reported to the police. More than one third of Canadian women report having had at least one experience of sexual assault since the age of 16. That's why it's so important that we remain committed to this issue. It's why the McGuinty government continues to be committed to preventing violence before it starts and helping victims when violence does occur. We increased the annual funding for sexual assault centres by 8%, the first increase in 13 years. We also added nearly \$1 million to expand services for women in Ontario's francophone communities, something that we all knew was vital. This is in addition to improved access to French-language telephone crisis support by annualized funding for regional French crisis lines and creating a toll-free number to act as a single point of access.

Last year, we provided \$1.3 million in one-time funding to sexual assault agencies across Ontario for public education, training and facility improvements. In May 2006, we announced that the government is providing \$1.6 million from the victims' justice fund to 18 community-based agencies to provide programs and services to victims of sexual assault and sexual violence. Let me take a moment to say thank you to the Attorney General, who works hand in hand with these organ-

izations to make it happen on the ground, for the great support we've had. This is in addition to the \$3.1 million from the victims' justice fund provided in 2005 to community-based agencies across Ontario to support victims of crime, including victims of sexual assault.

I applaud the work of the sexual assault centres and sexual assault domestic violence treatment centres, which are often the first stop for women who've been the victims of sexual assault. They work collaboratively with other community agencies to provide a continuum of care and counselling to victims. Many of us have gone to our own local centres in our own hometowns. I urge all of us to do so. Say thank you for the tremendous work that they do in very difficult times for these victims. Along with other community front-line workers, they promote public awareness about sexual assault and work towards preventing all types of violence against women. They teach the community that sexual assault is a violent crime that is rooted in power and control and, most importantly, that sexual assault is not the fault of the victim.

Our government is doing its part by raising public awareness. We've committed almost \$5 million over four years for a public education campaign to promote healthy, equal relationships, changing attitudes that perpetuate violence against women. We also understand that, in order to end violence against women, we have to have an integrated approach. We continue to prevent violence against women through better community supports, a strengthened justice system response, public education and increasing access to those services. We know that there is more work to do, and we're working with this every day. Let's hope we have the support of all of this House on such an important issue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize May as Sexual Assault Prevention Month in the province of Ontario, a month to shine light on and bring focus to a topic that unfortunately remains severely stigmatized in our society even after years of attempts to bring its subject matter to the fore. I'm sure that those who first marked this month as 31 days of action against, and awareness related to, sexual violence back in 1988 would not have hoped, nor predicted, that on the horizon of its 20th anniversary, our society would still be plagued by the effects of the tragic reality of sexual assault.

Sexual assault is not a partisan issue, nor does it discriminate between young and old, male or female. This month gives us an opportunity to come together in this House as legislators, and beyond these walls as Ontarians, to discuss and debate real and substantive ways to further awareness of, and take action on, this issue. To date we have clearly not done enough.

1440

I'm aware that often we have the tendency to simplify issues by considering them according to their statistical significance, but I have to tell you, upon reading through the figures associated with this particular set of crimes, this issue emerges as anything but simple. I recognize

that statistics resonate with some as mere numbers, but I truly would be remiss not to mention any of the most current and shocking figures associated with incidents of sexual assault. For example, when we hear statistics such as the fact that only one in 10 incidents of sexual assault are reported to police, not only should we be alarmed, but we are provided with a clear picture of where there is work to be done.

This month being Sexual Assault Prevention Month, it is evident that to tackle this problem, we must successfully equip the public, starting with our young people, with the awareness of support that exists for victims who report to police. Through aggressive education efforts, we can start to remove some of the stigma currently paralyzing those unable to come forward.

It is also known that in 86% of cases reported to the police, the victim and the accused are acquaintances. Furthermore, the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women found that 38% of sexually assaulted women are assaulted by their husbands, their common-law partners or their boyfriends. Astoundingly, one in four women will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime, and—perhaps the most disturbing figure that I came across—83% of disabled women will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime. I think we all agree that we have to do better.

I have focused much of my time today on sexual assaults that occur against women, perhaps rightfully so, given the fact that well over 80% of these crimes occur against women under the age of 25. But I would also like to remind Ontarians of the men and children who also suffer sexual assault each and every day. I would suspect that perhaps these two demographics report at an even lower rate than the already low 10% rate overall. We know that child sexual assault is a largely hidden crime, and it is reported that among adult Canadians, 53% of women and 31% of men were sexually abused when they were children. Among those, the most vulnerable are children with physical and mental disabilities.

Incidents of sexual assault are detrimental to the self-esteem and development of our young people and erode confidence in the workplace and at home with respect to those affected as adults. This is an epidemic that undercuts the very fabric of the fundamental values of freedom and equality that we are so proud to hold here in Ontario.

I commend the many groups that work tirelessly to spread awareness and remove the stigma associated with sexual assault, and I wish them all the best as they move forward with their campaigns throughout the month of May.

Specifically, I would like to recognize the Daisy of Hope campaign, a public awareness and education program targeting the issues of domestic violence, initiated by Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services in Brantford in 1999. I would ask that all members of the House join our caucus in recognizing this campaign by wearing the daisy pin for the month of May.

I would finally like to take this opportunity to issue a challenge to the government, and in fact to all members

of this House, to commit to ensuring that on this day next year, as we recognize the 20th anniversary of Sexual Assault Prevention Month, we are able to report a marked improvement on this file, and not let the paralyzing stigma associated with these unspeakable crimes continue any longer.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Three items were reported on last night's news alone that involved sexual assault on girls and women. May is the month that we devote to raising awareness about the need to prevent sexual violence and its devastating consequences.

I want to applaud the work of all women's groups and sexual assault centres across Ontario, and I know my NDP caucus colleagues would agree that that work is so extremely important. These agencies are on the front line and they're fighters in a battle that we have yet to win in this province. They help heal the psychological and physical wounds caused by sexual assault.

Sexual assault can include anything from unwanted sexual touching to rape and sexual exploitation. Sexual assault almost always injures the victim and can be life-threatening.

I become concerned when I hear of programs and services that deal with these issues being cut back or closing due to a lack of funding in this province. For example, Scarborough's Sexual Assault Care Centre lost its doctors recently. My Sister's Place in London is on very fragile footing because the Ontario government doesn't fund it and doesn't look like it's prepared to. In Oshawa, a women's emergency shelter just closed.

Sexual violence is not a thing of the past. I wish it was, but wishing is not going to make it so. Since sexual violence is still very much with us, then the programs designed to help women in crisis must continue to exist and be bolstered with adequate public funding.

Education is part of the solution, and both the minister and the critic for the Conservatives mentioned that in their remarks as well. It is part of the solution to eradicating sexual violence and sexual assault. Part of that is that young boys need role models. I want to commend, for example, efforts like the White Ribbon Campaign, spearheaded in part by our federal NDP leader, Jack Layton, where men take a strong public stand against violence against women. The Miss G_{irl} Project is another example. We've heard so much from these young university women who want to bring women's studies into the secondary school curriculum. Issues like sexual assault prevention should be covered in every school as part of what young people learn about life.

We need legislation such as the bill that I proposed, Bill 45, where workplace harassment, including sexual harassment, would become part of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and defined as a workplace hazard.

Here are some important facts to consider, and some of them have already been raised: Some 7% of Ontario women living in common-law or marital relationships experienced physical or sexual assault by a spousal partner at least once during the period of 1999 to 2004;

every second a woman somewhere in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence; over 86% of all criminal sexual assaults in Canada are against women; 51% of women in Canada have experienced at least one incidence of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16; there have been approximately 25 female victims of spousal homicide each year in Ontario from 1975 to 2004; 11% of Ontario women reported experiencing stalking during the period of 1999 to 2004, and we know with cyber-stalking, this is increasing; less than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to police.

Girls and young women are at the highest risk of being sexually assaulted. If they are sexually assaulted, it will most likely be by a boy or a man who is a friend, family member or someone else she knows, probably not by a stranger. This is, in fact, part of the reason why nine out of 10 sexual assaults are not reported. Unfortunately, the victim carries a heavy burden of humiliation, embarrassment and self-blame for the crime that was committed upon them. No victim is ever to blame.

This year's theme for Sexual Assault Prevention Month is "Step It Up." There are 10 specific demands for action from the government that have come forward in this campaign:

- (1) Understand that violence against women is an equality rights issue.
- (2) Recognize that male power is upheld by rape and sexual harassment.
- (3) Stop racism and oppression; make Ontario accessible.
- (4) End poverty now.
- (5) Create and maintain housing, non-profit child care, training—now.
- (6) Provide fair access to justice for women.
- (7) Hold violent men accountable for their actions.
- (8) Stop criminalizing and psychiatrizing women.
- (9) Demand secure funding for women's organizations.
- (10) Listen to survivors and women's advocates, because they are the experts.

I am sharing these points with the House again this year because Ontario still has a long way to go when measured against these 10 pillars, the supports that the women's community has identified as the urgent steps needed for reducing sexual assault and sexual violence and, dare we dream, to actually eradicate it from our society.

Today is about this Legislature re-committing to making sure that we increase the interest and the attention we pay to this most serious issue. It's our children, it's our daughters, it's our nieces and it's our nephews and our sons whom this issue affects every single day in our communities, in our schools, in our workplaces, at our community dances and in places where young people gather.

We know that women's groups have long called for more action. We know that coroners' juries have long called for more action. Let's step up the action and end sexual violence and sexual assault in Ontario once and for all.

VISITORS

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to acknowledge someone I just spotted in the public gallery, a councillor for the city of Thunder Bay and also the children's advocate for the city of Thunder Bay, Councillor Joe Virdiramo. Welcome, Joe.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I too would like to ask my colleagues to please join me in welcoming Dennis Mock, the president of Nipissing University of North Bay; Barb Taylor, the president of Canadore College; and Jason Corbett, who does yeoman service in my constituency office in North Bay, who are all here in the members' gallery.

1450

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning his political slush fund. Yesterday we heard further details about this slush fund: the Toronto Star reporting that Liberal MPPs were told to look for projects that were in need of money because funds were available. The story in the Cornwall Standard Freeholder reported the member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh confirmed that he was told that slush fund money was available to Liberal MPPs, and reconfirmed in the paper today. Liberal MPPs say they knew about it, you say they didn't know about it, so I say to the minister, who is telling the truth? The member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh or the minister? Who's telling the truth?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On October 26, 2006, the Minister of Finance, in his fall economic update, announced that there would be funding for capital infrastructure projects across the province, especially in areas, like Cornwall, that were suffering from high unemployment, and that the fall economic statement was going to make investments to help those areas in job creation and help people suffering in areas such as Cornwall.

Mr. Hudak: I guess another day, another bizarre answer from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I wonder if the Minister of Finance at the time announced that there was no application process for this slush fund. I wonder if the Minister of Finance at that time announced that there would be no review of these projects. I wonder if the Minister of Finance announced at the time that if you had a Liberal Party president or a Liberal candidate in your association, you had a much better chance of receiving the funding.

Another MPP, the member for Mississauga West, also must have had advance notice of your secret slush fund. I think the minister knows that his common-law spouse is

the executive director of Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services. My question for the minister is this: When the minister discussed this project with the member for Mississauga West, did the member inform the minister that his common-law spouse was the executive director, and what did the minister do to protect himself in this obvious conflict of interest?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, the Legislature was informed on October 26 that there would be capital funding investments across the province in this time of need, in places like Windsor, the Niagara Peninsula and Cornwall. Later in December, it said there would be \$190 million available to assist Ontario families who were affected by the downturn in some areas. The matter the member referred to also—all of our funding partners who are NSP agencies were given an opportunity to access sectoral improvement funds, and the one that he mentioned is a long-standing organization, along with the other 82 that receive funding to help improve their facilities. They did it along with the other 82.

Mr. Hudak: I'd point out that the minister studiously avoided the question of conflict of interest. The minister knows that the member for Mississauga West read in 19 petitions to the House on behalf of the ICNSS, where his common-law spouse is employed as the executive director. We have since learned that the Mississauga West provincial Liberal association is a documented registrant for the ICNSS website and we know that the MPP for Mississauga West himself is the technical contact for the website.

I say to the minister, combine this with a secret fund available to only Liberal MPPs and the lack of any kind of review process for these projects, and it casts a pall on this entire process. Will the minister not agree that it's time for him to stand up to Don Guy and the backroom Liberal campaign advisers and call in the Auditor General to get to the bottom of these projects?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This agency that the member alludes to is the same agency that his government funded when he was in cabinet. There are over 80 agencies that we're proud to partner with. These are agencies like AWIC, the Brampton Multicultural Community Centre, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. These are agencies that are community-based—some have been operating for over 25 years—that are helping newcomers learn English: Job Connect, settlement workers and school programs. They are doing this great work, and we helped them improve some of their facilities because the funding was available. All of them applied for it and received some of this funding.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New Question

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is also for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and it regards your slush fund. We now know that there were secret meetings held with only Liberal MPPs, who were asked to provide lists of groups that could benefit from the slush fund money. We know that you said that this slush fund money had to go through the Liberal Party campaign chair. But what

direction did you get from the Liberal campaign chair when it came to shipping out this slush fund money that you said you received direction from him about?

Hon. Mr. Colle: My ministry has been supporting agencies across this province that for many years have been ignored—agencies that provide essential services for newcomers, agencies that are volunteer-based, agencies that provide everything from Meals on Wheels to counselling services for battered women. Those are the agencies we consulted with, those are the agencies we partner with, and those are the agencies that need that funding, and we're proud to provide them with that funding.

Mrs. Witmer: To the minister again: This has nothing to do with who the money went to; it has everything to do with the lack of a process, the lack of a proposal, the lack of criteria. We have been questioning you for days and you have refused to answer. There are many, many groups in this province who are shocked that they had no opportunity to apply for this slush money.

You are quoted in the Toronto Star on April 20 of this year as saying that this money “has to go through the other ministers”—the Minister of Finance, who is the Liberal Party campaign chair, and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—“and ultimately, I guess, by cabinet.” Those are your words, Minister.

Will you tell us today what direction you received from the Liberal Party campaign chair as to who to give this money to?

The Speaker: Before the minister answers, I would just remind the members that they need to place their questions through the Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Throughout this province, there are organizations that are long-standing, like Frontier College, which we partnered with, which asked for funding for teaching literacy skills to First Nations children. We partnered with the Maytree Foundation, which provides a wide range of newcomer services. We partnered with associations big and small that have been asking for government attention for years. We provided these investments because these investments—whether they be in seniors' organizations, whether they be in heritage preservation organizations, or whether they be in newcomer services—are long overdue, and we made them to make Ontario better for newcomers, for seniors and for all Ontarians. That's what we did.

Mrs. Witmer: When there's a secret fund that only Liberals can access, it becomes really questionable, especially when there's no opportunity to apply, there's no criteria—there's absolutely nothing. In fact, nobody knows about it except your own caucus.

I want you, Mr. Minister, to recognize that at the present time, newspapers across this province support our call for the Auditor General to come in and clean up what smells a little bit like Adscam. Will you stand up today, do the right thing and call in the Auditor General so that we can eliminate that foul odour that's in this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Colle: You know, the organizations that we partnered with—London Cross Cultural Learner Centre,

the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario, the Multiculturalism Council of Windsor and Essex County, New Experiences for Refugee Women—these are centres that have been working with us in partnership, with governments of all parties. They've been funded by all governments for the most part. They are investments we made with them to increase their capacities. They're investments that we made with community organizations to reach out to more newcomers and to reach out to more service areas. That's what we did. We made those investments after many years of neglect, and these were very needed investments.

1500

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): The question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. On Friday, in answer to a journalist's question, the Premier implied that opposition members were racist because they were asking questions about the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund. Later—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Later on Friday, the Premier was forced to issue a statement saying that the answer to the journalist's question was no. Clearly, Minister, you didn't get the message, because you have continued to cast the same thinly veiled aspersions that got your Premier into trouble on Friday. When will you start treating the people of Ontario with some respect, stop casting your thinly veiled aspersions of racism and ask the Auditor General to immediately investigate and report on the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund?

The Speaker: Before the minister answers, I would like to remind the leader of the third party that questions need to come through me.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Premier was quite clear in what he said on Friday, and he stands by that statement that he made Friday night. I've said in this House, and I've said outside when asked by the newspapers or in scrums, that the root of the problem here is that, for many years, our newcomers who have been welcomed to Ontario have not been given the attention and the investments they need to succeed. I've said this is the result of parties of all stripes. I've said it's the result of different levels of government who have welcomed newcomers into this country and not given them the resources to succeed. That's what I said has been the essence of the problem, and that is what we're trying to deal with: to get rid of the neglect that has been shown many of our newcomers, who are too poor, suffer from too high levels of unemployment and have been ignored for too long. I said that's what the problem is.

Mr. Hampton: Clearly, Minister, you haven't been listening to the Premier and you weren't listening to some of your own government backbenchers, because

during the opposition day motion yesterday, numerous Liberal backbenchers, rather than demanding accountability from the Premier, rather than demanding transparency on how this slush fund was spent, continued to stand and cast aspersions of racism against other members of this Legislature.

The question is this, Minister: When will the McGuinty government do the right thing, call in the Auditor General to immediately investigate and report on the McGuinty government year-end slush fund, and when will you stop casting aspersions of racism simply because opposition members—

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Here's the same leader of the third party who had the gall to call these incredible, hard-working settlement agencies that have been serving this province for decades without any government support, on a volunteer basis—he had the gall to call these agencies serving newcomers “fly-by-nights.” That's what he did. What we've done here, all the members on this side, and I say the same thing with members on the other side: We are all working harder to ensure that the government of Ontario—we all are doing this together, I hope—pays proper attention to newcomers who come here with great hopes. That's why we're partnering with the same agencies he calls fly-by-nights, to allow newcomers to finally reach their dreams in this country.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: When an organization has no connection with the Iranian community but the head of the organization is a good friend of the Liberal campaign chairman, and the organization is an animal charity that has nothing to do with servicing newcomers and they suddenly get \$200,000, that looks to me like fly-by-night.

When another organization in Beaches–East York that has no connection to the Bengali community suddenly gets \$250,000 on the say-so of the Liberal MP, that sounds to people like fly-by-night.

I say again: When are members of the McGuinty government going to stop casting aspersions of racism because opposition members are asking for accountability and transparency, and when are you going to call in the Auditor General—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member opposite is very easy to condemn organizations. What we are trying to do is partner with the organizations. Some are very established—have been here for many years, doing incredibly good work—like SISO in Hamilton, COSTI in the greater Toronto area or the Catholic Immigration Centre in Ottawa. We are also partnering with some smaller organizations to try to meet the needs of newcomers and these other service areas. We're trying to work with them. They are not all huge organizations; some are very volunteer-based, trying to do their best. We are trying to partner with them and give them a helping hand.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Citizenship: Yesterday, during opposition day debate, the Liberal member

for Brampton West–Mississauga said, “We’ve funded the Royal Ontario Museum, the National Ballet of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario. Why hasn’t the opposition asked about that? I wonder, when it comes to small grants of \$50,000 to the food bank or the seniors’ centre in my riding or the gurdwaras—suddenly the opposition is up in arms.”

Minister, our point is this: There were literally dozens of gurdwaras that never had notice of this money; there were literally hundreds of food banks across the province that were not told about this money; there were literally dozens of seniors’ centres across this province that were not told about this money. We want to know, why weren’t there equal opportunities? Why were only people who somehow were connected to Liberal backbenchers or the Liberal campaign chair told about this? When are you going to stop casting aspersions? Bring in the Auditor General—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Colle: You can’t have it both ways. Certainly, long-established cultural organizations were questioned in the House yesterday about why grants were given to them.

What we’re saying is, whether it’s the AGO, the ROM or the Afghan women’s centre, there are many needs—diverse needs—across this province, whether they’re cultural, whether they’re for seniors’ groups. We, in all our ministries, are trying to meet those needs. We can’t meet all of them. We are trying to do that, and that’s why we said we are even now setting up a process for more capital investments with a direct-line application, because for 20 years nothing was done in this area. We’re trying to make the process better so we can help more groups in the future.

Mr. Hampton: We are certainly aware that there was no process. The Hindu Samaj Temple in Hamilton, which was the victim of a hate crime and had their temple burned down, came to your government four times and said, “We want to rebuild our temple,” and they were answered, “No. There is no money.” But other organizations that were connected to the chair of the Liberal campaign, who have no history of serving the community, had no trouble getting a quarter of a million dollars.

The Liberal member for London North Centre said, “I am not going to impute any motives to anyone, because I think that is dangerous.” I ask members of the McGuinty government: Why do you continue to cast aspersions when we simply ask for an auditor’s investigation? Why do you continue to say that simply asking for an auditor’s—

1510

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There is a wide range of organizations of all different sizes and of all different service deliveries that we have partnered with. From the Korean Canadian Women’s Association to organizations like New Experiences for Refugee Women, all kinds of grass-roots organizations, the Rexdale Women’s Centre, the

Riverdale Immigrant Women’s Centre, Settlement and Integration Services Organization—these are the organizations we’re trying to fund. We understand that the opposition is asking questions—that’s their job. We also want the opposition, especially the leader of the third party, to stop painting everybody with a brush. He said emphatically in this House that these organizations that were being funded were “fly-by-night.” There are exceptional organizations that have been funded by his party and the other party, and continue to be funded, which do not deserve to be painted with that brush, as the leader of the third party has done.

Mr. Hampton: To hear members of the McGuinty government try to lecture someone about painting people with a brush—let me tell you what I find offensive about that, Minister. There are 55 First Nations in my constituency that are amongst the poorest communities in this province. Every one of them needs a food bank. Every one of them needs a seniors’ centre. Every one of them needs help with caring for children. I checked with those First Nations, and not one of them got any notice—no application form, no notice whatsoever—about this year-end \$30 million of money. Yet, when we ask questions about how they could be neglected and left out, Liberal backbenchers cast aspersions of racism. I ask again: When are members of the McGuinty government going to stop the aspersions of racism against members like me and answer the question—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women’s issues): You’re outrageous.

Mr. Hampton: You’re corrupt.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration—

The Speaker: The member of the third party will withdraw.

Mr. Hampton: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member has withdrawn.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have two separate points. First of all, I want to understand why you called my leader under order when the Minister of Economic Development and Trade called him a racist and you didn’t call her under order.

Second—

Interjections.

The Speaker: If the minister made that comment—which I didn’t hear—but if she did, she can withdraw. What’s your second point of order, then?

Mr. Bisson: I would just tell the Speaker that I’ve been watching the timing, and you’re very good at cutting the time off from the questions of the opposition and not the government.

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Hudak: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’d like your judgment on the Minister of Health’s use of the

word "slimeball" to describe members of the opposition. Is that parliamentary?

The Speaker: If the minister made that comment, which I did not hear, I'm sure he would withdraw.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I did not make the comment alleged by the honourable member. But if I made any comment that anyone found offensive, then I'm happy to withdraw it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I have a mandate to help our newcomers on the immigration side of my portfolio. I also have the mandate to ensure strong citizenship participation. That's why, for the first time as a ministry, we have partnered with Frontier College and the Lieutenant Governor in investing \$814,000 in providing literacy camps all across First Nations areas of northern Ontario, as part of our mandate not only to help our newcomers but also to help citizens throughout Ontario who may need help. I think helping with Frontier College and literacy camps for First Nations is a proud investment we've made with our First Nations youth. That is a program we funded under this program, and we're proud of that investment.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, through you to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the same minister who's been caught red-handed doling out funds indiscriminately: I have it on reliable authority that at this very moment, the executive director and a group of volunteers who have worked at a not-for-profit organization in Richmond Hill since 2001, a settlement services organization, are right now packing up files and furniture because they don't have the resources to keep their doors open. These are the services that were being delivered through this organization until today: settlement assistance to refugees and immigrants; education and skills training; helping immigrants and newcomers to settle and integrate.

These services have been provided through this organization since 2001 and have stopped today. The executive director and the volunteers want to know why this minister's slush fund could not support that organization.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Energy.

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Colle: I wish the member opposite would name the organization, which he hasn't done. But one thing I will tell him is that because of the hard-fought battle to receive equal funding like Quebec from the federal government, agencies and settlement workers across this province are seeing increases in program funding like they haven't seen in 20 years: 30% to 50% increases in settlement services, in the host program, in job training programs. So there are agencies getting more money and hiring more people, and that's a good story.

And I'd like to know the name of the agency in question, please.

Mr. Klees: I'm pleased to provide that name. It's My Canada Integration and Settlement Services, in Richmond Hill.

The executive director and the volunteer board would like to know why this minister dumped \$200,000 into the bank account of the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre only three weeks after it was formed, an organization that is not known in the community, that has no track record of providing services, that now has \$200,000 sitting in a bank account. All that My Canada wanted was \$36,000 to stay in business.

This minister is shutting the door on My Canada. We want an explanation as to why there was no money—\$36,000—and why he was prepared to dump \$200,000 into an organization no one knows anything about.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm interested in hearing the minister respond.

Minister.

1520

Hon. Mr. Colle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite, in context, was part of a government—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): What a piece of work.

The Speaker: The member for Halton, you'll need to withdraw that.

Mr. Chudleigh: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: That former minister was in a government that, if you look through Hansard in their nine years in power, see where they even mention the word "newcomers" or "immigration." It was totally ignored. Funding was flatlined. They never fought for money from the federal government. We have gotten money from the federal government for those agencies.

From time to time there are a number of agencies that are seeking help. There is one in Guelph right now that we're helping, along with the federal government, that has gone through a bit of financial difficulty. That does occur, and we try to help stabilize them. We're doing that all the time. Plus, there are all kinds of agencies, as I said, that year after year have gotten no attention, no investment from any level of government. If you go through all of the settlement sector and ask these agencies, they are finally getting—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Yesterday, leaders of the Hindu Samaj Temple in Hamilton were here to make their case for a grant from the McGuinty Liberal government. Their members were raising millions and millions of dollars not once, but in fact twice, to build and then rebuild the regional temple and multicultural centre after it was destroyed by arson on September 15, 2001, in Ontario's worst post-September 11 hate crime.

Everyone except the Ontario government has contributed to the Hindu Samaj rebuilding campaign since then: the federal government, the city of Hamilton and the broader Hamilton community. In fact, schoolchildren donated their lunch money. Hamilton police held barbecues for charity to try to raise the money to help them rebuild.

My question is this: Why did the McGuinty government repeatedly refuse to contribute to the Hindu Samaj Temple rebuilding campaign or even tell the group that Liberals had funding available for this exact purpose?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said yesterday, the tragedy that occurred in September 2001 by an arsonist was despicable. I think everybody across the country was in empathy with this horrific situation and tried to ensure that this would never happen again.

I know the members of this very worthy community, the Hindu Samaj Temple, have been working and discussing ways of getting help with all levels of government. I know there has been a little bit of resources given to them. I know they've gotten a little bit of Trillium money. It's not enough. That's why I said to them yesterday, and I'll say it again: This is a perfect example of why—for so many years, these very needy organizations, these very important cultural, religious, charitable organizations, have been asking for help—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Horwath: I appreciate that the minister feels their pain, but the bottom line is that they need funding and they need it now. I think I would feel much better, and I know they would, if they knew when the time was right that they could have applied for that funding and been in a fair process to be able to obtain it. Instead, the community members have been forced to take out personal bank loans to fill the void left by the McGuinty government's refusal to help them rebuild over the past three years.

I ask the minister this, through you, Mr. Speaker: To ease the unfair financial burden that has been placed on them, to make up for not informing this group about the availability of funding, to have Ontario take a visible and important stand against this racist hate crime, will the minister commit to meeting with the Hindu Samaj representatives and myself as soon as possible about applying for, and hopefully receiving, the funding assistance that they deserve?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've said it repeatedly: There are incredible needs in many community organizations across this province. That's why we're tried to help these organizations that have never been helped before. We're not saying that the needs have been met for all of the worthy organizations. That's why we said we've got to do a better job and that's why we've set up a direct application form for capital projects, which never existed before by any government.

We're starting to do better, we need to do better, and I would be more than happy to sit down with the member and the members of the organization, at her convenience. That is something I will do if she wishes.

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, under the previous government, my riding of Perth–Middlesex suffered deep cuts to health care. During the first few years of power, over \$3 million was cut by the Tories from my community hospitals in Stratford, St. Marys and Listowel.

During the last three years, it's been a decidedly different story. I have witnessed a health care renaissance in my riding that began with new substantial investments in primary care and community hospitals. Four family health teams are taking shape in Perth county, giving over 3,400 previously orphaned patients access to a regular family doctor. The hospitals in my riding have seen their combined funding increase by almost \$24 million since we took office.

This story is not unique to my riding. Where else in the province are we seeing this kind of redevelopment in health care?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): One of the communities where we're particularly proud of the investment pattern we've been able to make is the fast-growing community of Barrie, Ontario. I'm pleased to acknowledge the presence of the Honourable Aileen Carroll, who served that community with tremendous distinction.

In the first year of government under the Conservatives, they cut the hospital budget at Royal Victoria by \$1.5 million. Now, through the term of our government to date, we've increased funding at Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie by \$25.1 million. We're building one of the largest family health teams, which is providing care to 100,000 patients. Already, 14,100 patients in Barrie who did not previously have a doctor are now connected to the family health team. As part of a much-necessary redevelopment of the Royal Victoria Hospital, our Premier was recently in Barrie where he made the announcement that we're adding 32 beds, for a total of 101 new beds in the long-awaited redevelopment of the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, Ontario.

Mr. Wilkinson: My constituents often say that access to a family doctor is their biggest concern when it comes to health care. I know, after speaking to my brother Stephen, who lives in the great city of Barrie, that that is a concern there as well.

But primary health care is only one aspect of the health care system. Statistics Canada recently released new information which suggests that cancer may soon become Canada's number one killer. Our government has made major investments in new cancer centres and surgeries, and I am proud to say that the wait times for cancer surgery have dropped at the Stratford General Hospital, in my riding.

I ask the minister, what initiatives are you developing to help improve access to cancer services for other communities as well?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Barrie stands as a primary example of our message in health care—that the best health care you can find is the health care that you find as close to home as possible.

Very soon we'll build a new regional cancer centre in Barrie, and today it's my privilege to be able to announce a \$4.5-million investment in the Barrie community. We'll be delivering, this fall, a new mobile radiation unit at Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. It will begin operation this fall. It will serve 400 patients closer to home, saving them a drive to Toronto, and, importantly, this new cancer bunker—a new mobile radiation cancer bunker—will allow the community of Barrie and the Royal Victoria Hospital to begin to develop the staff skill set that they need so that cancer services can begin to be provided in the Barrie community in the fall of 2007.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Culture. On Friday, the Premier said you were running a slush fund. He said that tens of millions of dollars went to their—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The Minister of Energy will come to order. I will not warn the Minister of Energy again. The member for York North.

1530

Mrs. Munro: He said that tens of millions of dollars went to various cultural groups with “no formal application process. We were just lobbied intensely by a number of very important, powerful people. The money goes out the door just like that.” But yesterday in question period, the minister contradicted the Premier, saying that there was a process, there were applications, there were accounting documents.

All we are after here is a simple answer to a simple question: Which version is accurate? They can't both be. Will the minister tell us who is right, she or the Premier?

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I want to say how proud I am of the investments we have made in our libraries, our museums and other major agencies in arts and culture.

It's smart to invest in our arts and culture, because this sector as a whole contributes over \$17 billion to Ontario's economy, and I'm proud of the commitment and support we have provided. These are agencies of my ministry. They are subject to annual audits and have boards of directors. They also have significant private sector support.

Ontario, during the Conservative years, was too long in the backwater when it came to arts and culture, and we're going to be changing that.

Mrs. Munro: It doesn't require a long answer. On Friday, the Premier said the money “goes out the door just like that.” The minister said yesterday, and says again today, that there was a process, there was an application. All we want her to confirm for us is which

version of events is accurate, hers or the Premier's? Whom should we believe?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: Libraries that received \$5 million are libraries in communities that are under 20,000 people. The libraries were cut by half overnight when the Conservatives were in power. Our libraries are also funded by municipalities. Our arts and cultural agencies in this province—again I say that these are smart investments that we're making across the board, because they have a great impact on our economy and our quality of life. That's the reason we make those investments, and these agencies have proved over and over again that they're internationally renowned in the work—

The Speaker: New question.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question, again, is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Auditor General's website states—I want to be accurate, so I'll put my glasses on—“In assessing whether the government is doing a good job managing the public purse, members of Ontario's Legislature must have objective, appropriate and timely information.”

For weeks, members of this assembly, members of editorial boards of the major newspapers in Ontario, multicultural agencies and ordinary Ontarians have demanded answers on the McGuinty Liberals' mismanagement of the public purse and the grant process.

There's one chance left, Mr. Minister, and my question through the Speaker is, why don't you do the right thing and let the Auditor General examine the grants?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The grants that were given to long-standing organizations like the United Jewish Appeal, the Canadian Museum of Hindu Civilization and the Ireland Park Foundation are all there on the public record. These are organizations that have provided great service or are going to create something that's very important in commemorating, for instance, the arrival of victims of the Irish famine. The office of the auditor has the power within its mandate to look at any ministry when it wants.

Mr. Prue: Yes, it has, but the word is “timely”; that is, being able to do it before the next audit year. The Auditor General wrote to Saeed Soltanpour from the Iranian community, the one who told you that this was all bad, what you were doing. I quote the Auditor General: “The mandate of the Auditor General is to audit the government and grant recipients on behalf of the Legislative Assembly.”

Minister, \$200,000 went to an animal welfare group formerly headed by the president of the Liberal riding association. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars went to an unknown Bangladeshi group with known Liberal ties to your mentor, Maria Minna. Even you in press scrums admitted that it looked really bad. My question, through the Speaker: What do you fear with the Auditor General examining your books and your process?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We've made investments in organizations all across the province that have provided incredibly good services, organizations that have laudatory goals of trying to help newcomers or help seniors or teach literacy skills to First Nations. Those are the partners that we have made investments with. Those are partnerships that are much needed, and we've made those investments because for too long these organizations have told us that their needs were not being met. We are trying to do the best we can to ensure they can meet those needs of many deserving people across this province.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, the McGuinty government has made progress in improving our highway infrastructure and promoting transit across our province. In my riding of Thornhill, we have seen results. We have benefited from the \$670 million allocated for the subway extension into my riding, in addition to \$308.6 million for transportation and highway infrastructure in York region, which will be of great benefit to my constituents. I know that those successes are not limited to my riding but are being realized across the province. How has the McGuinty government's commitment to making up for years of neglect from the Tories and the NDP benefited those in Simcoe county, in particular the city of Barrie?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the member for Thornhill for his question. We have, in fact, invested \$6.3 billion in our highways and our infrastructure since 2003. We've also made a \$3.6-billion investment in public transit, \$1.8 billion alone into GO—desperately needed in what I call a “decade of neglect” by two previous governments who couldn't fix potholes, much less get the GO trains going. I think, as a matter of fact, they sold it, downloaded and then uploaded.

But there's no question that a good example of how we've invested is in Simcoe county: \$9.2 million alone in public transit, with Barrie receiving \$7 million itself. In addition to that, we are moving forward with the completion of Highway 400 and Highway 26, projects desperately needed in the region. So there's no question: We cover all of Ontario, not just some of Ontario.

Mr. Racco: Those investments are impressive and demonstrate the progress that we have made in less than four short years. Minister, I know that the people of Barrie have long needed and waited for better public transit services. Although they have received a large portion of Simcoe county's share of investments in the area, I know that there is special interest in seeing GO Transit extended to that community. Will the minister tell this honourable House what is being done to move this forward for the people of Barrie?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Again I thank the member for the question. We're working very closely with the city of Barrie on the planned GO expansion. We're in the process of finalizing that agreement. The agreement will

allow GO Transit to purchase and upgrade the rail corridor. It will build a new station parking lot and a layover facility. The project is scheduled for completion by late 2007. We're working with the city of Barrie for better service, for more choices for the Barrie transit riders, and we're making a real difference.

1540

This project is part of the Canada strategic infrastructure fund and is consistent with all the approaches we're making with all of the municipalities—the city of Barrie is just a really good example—and approximately \$30 million worth of total project costs, including construction and property.

The question is, “What are we doing?” The answer is, “Everything we possibly can for all of the people of Ontario, not some of them.”

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration responsible for the Liberal Party slush fund. My colleagues have been asking this question for days now, hoping that somehow we might get an answer from you. You're quoted in the Toronto Star on April 20, 2007, as saying this money “has to go through other ministers”—the Minister of Finance who, incidentally, is the Liberal Party campaign chair, and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—“and ultimately, I guess, by cabinet.” Those are your words, Minister.

Minister, will you please tell us what direction you have received from the Liberal Party campaign chair on how you dole out this Liberal slush money?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I again would like to remind members that they need to place their question through the Speaker.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The one thing that the member opposite still does not understand is that, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I'm out in the community every night. Last night I was at the Coptic church in Mississauga. The Coptic church in Mississauga has a child care centre. They have a senior's centre. They take care of young people with disabilities. It's all volunteer-run. The mayor in Mississauga calls it the jewel of Mississauga.

The other day I was at the Afghan women's centre at Don Mills and Eglinton—when you hear the pleas for help from them. I visit the Korean women's association up here on Bloor, where they've been working, helping Korean Canadians for years. These are the organizations, big and small, that keep on asking for more government support, more government acknowledgment.

Mr. Yakabuski: The minister needs to answer this question if he has any interest in transparency and accountability. It's a shadowy process that stinks like Adscam.

Earlier today the minister made reference to an announcement of funding made by the Minister of Finance

back in the fall. The minister said the payment to the Lost Villages group referenced here yesterday came out of that fund, but it was announced by him, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh says there was no application process. In fact, he heard about it in the caucus room when they asked for Liberal MPPs to come up with some names and numbers. So now we want to know again from the minister, how did it work? Did the Liberal Party campaign chair call you and tell you how to dole out that slush money? Please tell us or bring in the—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, I've been to Cornwall; I've seen the pain in the eyes of the mayor, the councillors, the new immigrants from Pakistan that are going to Cornwall. I've seen the need to help Cornwall, as did the fall economic statement that said that this government was going to make investments in parts of Ontario that were not doing as well as other parts. That investment we made in Cornwall to help Stuart House was in a building that was built in 1810 by United Empire Loyalists. There are hard-working volunteers who have been working to save that building for a number of years. We were proud to be partners with the volunteers who have rebuilt the basement and the first floor so that can be a continuing shrine to the incredible contributions made by our first immigrants, the United Empire Loyalists.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is again to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Auditor General's website also states, "Under the Auditor General Act, the Auditor General may also be asked to undertake special assignments to perform value-for-money audits as requested by the standing committee on public accounts, or a minister of the crown."

It's quite clear that the standing committee was shut down by your Liberal colleagues. It's quite clear that the question put before this House yesterday was shut down by your Liberal colleagues. The question, through you, Mr. Speaker, that I have is: Will you, as the minister of the crown who has the authority to do so, ask the Auditor General to undertake—

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: These investments are now on our website. The names of the organizations and the amounts they got are on our website. We've said that we are going to make the process better by also having a full-time, direct application process for capital projects because for too many years these capital projects, needed in many diverse communities, were being totally ignored. We've been investing more in the operating side, and we've been trying to ensure that the gaps on the capital side are finally being listened to. That's what we've tried to do with our partners across the province.

Mr. Prue: Again back to the minister—

The Speaker: There seems to be some confusion. If the question is placed through the Speaker, then it's fine.

When you say the word "you," that means it isn't being placed through the Speaker.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you're skirting around the issue. Ontarians deserve a full explanation and a proper accounting of your grants and how you gave out the money. Your party voted this down in the public accounts committee. Your party and your caucus voted it down yesterday in this House. Through the Speaker: Mr. Minister, will you do the right thing and ask the Auditor General, as a minister of the crown, to examine the grants, yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member opposite was quite ready on his feet last week to condemn an organization that was funded by his former colleagues, funded by the other government. He condemned that community-based organization. Those are the community-based organizations that we have partnered with, that we have funded, and they provide much-needed services. The office of the auditor has the power to look at any ministry. We know that. I'm also going to be appearing before the estimates committee. There are questions being asked, and we are trying to do the best we can to answer those questions.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I'd like to ask a question on behalf of the good people of Barrie, and my question is directed to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. As members of this Legislature know, the greater Golden Horseshoe is the fastest-growing region in Canada and one of the fastest in North America. Over the next 25 years, we're expecting an additional 3.7 million people and 1.8 million new jobs in the area.

According to the 2006 Canada census, the Barrie-Innisfil-Springwater township area has experienced substantial growth in the past five years, growing to 177,000 people from 148,000 people. I am aware that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal released the final growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe on June 16, 2006, that's now in effect. In this plan, downtown Barrie has been identified—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): There has been a question. Minister?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to thank all the members opposite for telling us what a great job Joe Tascona is doing up in Barrie—

The Speaker: Minister?

1550

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for the question. When we came to office, we certainly realized that a plan was needed to curb urban sprawl in Ontario. The growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe focuses growth in urban centres and major corridors—and downtown Barrie has been identified in the growth plan as an urban growth centre—which will help focus investment and redevelopment on downtowns and

on waterfront revitalization. The growth plan's coordinated approach to growth across the area, including Simcoe county, will help strengthen Barrie as a regional centre that will accommodate additional people and jobs, and become a focal point for cultural facilities, public institutions, major services—

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Milloy: I want to thank the minister for recognizing that the revitalization of urban growth centres is particularly important. I know the designation of downtown Kitchener and uptown Waterloo as urban growth centres in my community will ensure that they have the potential to become more vibrant, mixed-use, transit-supportive communities.

Having a growth plan is the first step, but certainly there's still more that needs to be done. These urban growth centres—downtown Barrie, for example—are not all at the same stage of development. Some are the downtowns of older cities while others are newly planned suburban centres. Would the minister tell us what else has to be done or if he has a plan to deal with the next steps?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I want to commend the member from Kitchener Centre for bringing these matters to this chamber, because we don't hear from the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford about Barrie—not one question. Not one time has he stood up for the great community of Barrie, and I want the member from Kitchener Centre to know that this government does.

We've anticipated growth and proactively planned for it through an historic growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe with clear standards for growth and development, while giving local governments the flexibility they need to maintain their unique characteristics.

Along with the growth plan, we've developed ReNew Ontario, a \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan to modernize public infrastructure right across the greater Golden Horseshoe, including extending GO service right up—

The Speaker: Thank you.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Under standing order 36, dealing with oral questions, there's a concern—and I only refer to a number of questions laterally in question period, but I know a number of other colleagues were getting strong indications that there's a significant disparity in terms of timing for questions on the opposition side and responses and questions on the government side. I would ask you to carefully consider that concern.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I of course will do that.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: My point of order relates to standing order 20(b). I'd like to read it: "When a member is speaking, no other member shall interrupt such member, except on a question of order." It also arises out of a point of privi-

lege. I'd like to refer to standing order 21(a), which relates to privileges as being "the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom." I'm specifically referring to an issue that arises out of these proceedings.

Speaker, I'm appealing to you to give consideration to what I'm about to tell you. For the last number of days in this House, I've observed that when ministers are making their statement, we can hear those statements, and in large part the opposition parties are taking the time to listen to the statements that are being made. What is happening is that the minute the opposition is called upon for responses, there is an overt attempt by the government side, as though orchestrated—and I'm appealing to you to please, in future, be observant of that, because it is grossly unfair and I suggest to you that it's an affront of my privileges here that, when it's our turn to respond to ministers' statements, there's an overt attempt by the government benches, through their heckling, to drown out the response of the opposition parties. It's inappropriate; it's inconsistent with the rules under which we are to conduct our business here. I would ask you to do so.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Listening to the member's point of order to take seriously that in the standing orders there are rules that govern our behaviour in this place, he has quoted the appropriate order that indicates that we're not supposed to be speaking when another member is speaking. I would support him on his request for that particular issue that he has raised. But I would also suggest very respectfully, as chief government whip, that no overt or covert activity has ever taken place by this office and by the members of this side to do anything untoward to the opposition. I would suggest respectfully again that the Speaker makes the decision on the order of this place, and he has done a good job.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was interrupted by one point of order. I'm back to the point of order by the honourable House leader.

The Speaker: We were discussing the member for Oak Ridges's point of order, if I could deal with that one.

Mr. Bisson: You didn't give me a chance to get back to the first one.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: If you do choose to take this under advisement and report back to the House, perhaps you could also speak to the behaviour last week by the official opposition during question period, to use the words of the member for Oak Ridges, to determine whether or not there was some overt effort in order to in some way interfere with the operation of question period. If you're going to look at the decorum of the House, which I would encourage you to do, I hope that you will look at the language that's being used by the official opposition and the third party and the tactics of last week during question period. If we are going to start going

down this path, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, I look very much forward to a comprehensive look at the subject of the new civility.

The Speaker: I appreciate the member from Oak Ridges's point and the member for Brant and the Attorney General providing me with some advice. I am someone who has a firm belief and am very proud to be the Speaker in an institution that follows the Westminster practices of parliamentary democracy. It is an important tenet of that democracy that self-regulation of the body is the key to making this system work. Civility, maturity and self-regulation are what make Parliaments work. The Speaker, I would observe, as I did last fall, is becoming increasingly the enforcer of first resort rather than the enforcer of last resort of what is the responsibility collectively of all of us.

So I take your point, member for Oak Ridges, under consideration. I believe you make a good point, but not just about responses or ministers' statements; I think it is a wise and interesting point in general.

Mr. Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Not to rain on your parade, but this is a two-way street. Quite frankly, in this last question period you have overtly cut off the time of the opposition in asking questions and extended the time of the government. I'm asking you, further on from question period, to please—

The Speaker: I take your point seriously. That has not happened. What has happened is that members have asked questions. When they have asked the question, it has been put to the minister. That is what has happened. I repeat: I've been trying to get people to understand that in the tradition of Westminster, in the tradition of the House of Commons, in the tradition of all the Legislatures in this great country and across the Commonwealth, questions and responses must be made through the Speaker. That means you never speak of another member in the second person; it is always in the third. I think that is clear and needs to happen. That is something that I am going to as rigorously enforce as I possibly can. I'm sure I will get the assistance of every member of this Legislature in following that tradition.

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE LEGAL PARENTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): "Whereas the appeal court of Ontario on January 2, 2007, ruled that 'a child may have more than two legal parents';

"Whereas that sets a precedent and leaves many unanswered questions which could result in possible multiple legal parents and unknown devastating ramifications to children and families of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to appeal the Ontario Court decision, so that various levels of government may

thoroughly study the personal, societal and legal implications of allowing more than two legal parents."

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 30(b), it being 4 p.m., I am now required to call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mrs. Bountrogianni moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 218, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister responsible for democratic renewal to lead off.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I will be sharing my time this evening with my colleague Linda Jeffrey, the member from Brampton Centre. She is my parliamentary assistant for democratic renewal and I would like to thank her for all her hard work on this bill—

Applause.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Yes—and for her commitment. She has hurt her foot and yet she's here working all week, even though she's limping and in pain.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today to begin second reading debate on Bill 218, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007. This legislation, if passed, would make it easier for Ontarians to vote and improve the security and integrity of the electoral process. This legislation would direct Elections Ontario to conduct a neutral public education campaign for the upcoming referendum on electoral reform. It will also make election activity more transparent to the people of Ontario.

The heart of Ontario's democracy is a system of regular elections that allow citizens to choose the people who will represent and govern them. When that system reflects the values of citizens, it produces a democracy that is rich, vital and strong. I'm sure all members on all sides of the House would like to see more Ontarians cast a ballot in every election. We are all working to make that happen.

En tant que ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique, je suis fière de ce projet de loi qui concerne l'un de nos droits les plus fondamentaux, le droit de vote. Cette loi, si elle est votée, facilitera l'exercice du droit de

vote des Ontariens et Ontariennes. Parallèlement, elle renforcera l'intégrité du processus électoral.

The changes we have proposed include practical, cost-efficient steps to modernize elections in Ontario. These are changes that will make a difference and, if passed, they will be in place for the October 10, 2007, election.

Our government's democratic renewal initiatives are designed to ensure that our electoral processes keep pace with the needs of Ontarians. This legislation will continue to enhance Ontario's electoral system.

We have set fixed-date elections: the first Thursday of October every four years, beginning in 2007. This ensures that the timing of elections is predictable and not used as a political tool by the government of the day.

We have banned partisan government advertising. Any advertising campaigns have to first be approved by the Provincial Auditor. This ensures the people of Ontario will just get the facts when the government sponsors an advertising campaign.

We also require that the Minister of Finance release a pre-election report about Ontario's finances to the Provincial Auditor for independent review before an election. This ensures that all Ontarians are aware of the state of Ontario's finances before an election. This report has just been tabled. We are making Ontario's finances more transparent to the people of Ontario.

D'autre part, les contributions politiques supérieures à 100 \$ sont désormais communiquées en temps réel aux partis et aux chefs en lice. Cette information est publiée sur Internet dans les 10 jours suivant le report de la contribution à Élections Ontario. Cela permet aux citoyens et citoyennes de l'Ontario de connaître, dès la validation en ligne, le nom des personnes donatrices, et d'identifier les intérêts en jeu.

Those improvements are making a difference, and this government is aware of the demands facing Ontarians. We are committed to providing public services that are easy to access, as well as improving our current democratic system using a number of initiatives such as those just mentioned.

This piece of legislation is another step forward. The changes proposed in this bill will make it easier than ever for all Ontarians to exercise their democratic right to vote by providing new, flexible voting options.

If passed, Bill 218 would make it easier for Ontarians to vote by adding seven additional days of advance polling in regularly scheduled general elections, increasing the number of advance polling days from six to 13 at returning offices. There would also be 10 days of advance polling at other locations. In by-elections and other general elections, there will continue to be six advance polling days.

Ontarians lead very busy lives. This legislation, if passed, would extend the polling day by one hour, to 9:00 p.m., so that people would have more time to vote on election day. Polls would close at 8:00 p.m. in part of northwestern Ontario due to the different time zones. To clarify any misunderstandings in this House, voters

everywhere in Ontario will receive an additional hour to vote.

It would also establish additional accessibility criteria for selecting polling locations. Criteria for selecting polling locations will include capacity, familiarity and lack of geographic barriers. The need for compliance with the Human Rights Code and applicable standards adopted under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, will be emphasized.

The increased number of advance poll days will make it easier for Ontarians with disabilities to vote by providing increased flexibility. The criteria to be enshrined, if this bill passes, would also ensure that Ontarians do not face any geographic barriers to get to a polling station. I will go into more detail later, but this legislation would also allow the Chief Electoral Officer to pilot new voting or vote counting technologies, some that could make it easier for Ontarians with disabilities to cast their votes.

Élections Ontario devrait continuer à pouvoir installer des bureaux de vote dans des immeubles résidentiels, des écoles, des immeubles municipaux et provinciaux.

Confusion at the ballot box could be reduced if this legislation is passed. Candidates' party affiliation would appear on the ballot if they are endorsed by a party. Candidates not endorsed by a party could be identified as independents at the candidates' request. This means that people who may want to vote for a particular policy belonging to a political party but who may not know the candidate's name, particularly if it's a new candidate, would now be able to do so because they could easily identify the party.

I'd like to thank my friend Richard Patten, the member from Ottawa Centre, for his work on this initiative. This will help voters make more informed choices at the ballot box.

Si cette loi est adoptée, elle devrait également permettre d'augmenter la participation électorale en Ontario. En donnant au directeur général des élections le pouvoir explicite d'entreprendre des campagnes de sensibilisation publique et de communication concernant les élections, la participation électorale serait encouragée.

Le directeur général des élections pourrait mieux faire connaître le processus électoral du public. Il pourrait également transmettre aux conseils scolaires de l'information destinée aux nouveaux votants ayant atteint l'âge de vote légal. Ces trousse de documentation permettraient aux étudiants et à leur famille de mieux comprendre notre processus électoral. Nous croyons que la participation des jeunes de l'Ontario est indispensable à la santé de notre démocratie.

As this Legislature knows, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform has been working diligently since last September to assess the current electoral system and other systems in order to recommend whether Ontario should keep its current system or adopt a new one. Never before in Ontario's history has a government delegated so much power to the people of this province to make a decision about an issue of fundamental importance. We did so because we believe that ordinary people working

together can accomplish extraordinary things. One Ontarian from every riding in the province was given the time and the resources to learn about, talk about and think about the issue of how we in this chamber should be elected. I had the privilege of meeting with the citizens' assembly members this past weekend to extend the government's gratitude for their contribution. I was impressed by the commitment and dedication to the important task that they accepted on behalf of their fellow Ontarians.

1610

One member of the citizens' assembly had just given birth, and brought her eight-day-old baby to the celebration and to the final meeting of the citizens' assembly on the weekend. Little Ulysses was present.

As we are all aware, the citizens' assembly voted on April 15 in favour of recommending a different electoral system to the people of Ontario. I look forward to receiving its final report and recommendations on May 15.

This bill amends the Election Act, which would now require the Chief Electoral Officer to conduct a neutral public education campaign to provide electors across Ontario with the following information for the referendum on electoral reform: the date of the referendum, the content of the choices in the referendum, the referendum process and the question electors will be asked to vote on.

Il est essentiel de sensibiliser très largement les Ontariens et les Ontariennes afin qu'ils disposent de l'information dont ils ont besoin pour faire leur choix lors d'un référendum concernant la réforme électorale. Cette information doit impérativement être neutre et impartiale, afin que nos citoyens et citoyennes puissent forger leurs propres convictions sur ce sujet d'importance.

This legislation also proposes a new security provision to ensure the integrity of the electoral process. We would improve security by requiring voters to present proof of identity and, in some cases, proof of residence in order to vote. Identification would also be required to change information on the voters' list or add a name to the voters' list on polling day.

We no longer live in a world where the poll captain or scrutineer knows everyone who shows up to vote by name. Identification is an appropriate safeguard in today's world. I don't think Ontarians will find it unreasonable to be asked for ID to do something as important as voting. Other provinces require electors to provide evidence of their identity by showing some form of ID. There would also be an alternative process for those who do not have ID. The CEO will prescribe the documents required for proof of identification and post information about what documents constitute appropriate identification on Elections Ontario's website. In this province, ID is required to rent a DVD but not to vote. Casting a vote is a serious act that deserves to have this new security provision.

Election integrity in all elections would also be improved by clarifying that eligible scrutineers may chal-

lenge the right to vote of an elector in their own or another electoral district during by-elections. This brings the rules surrounding scrutineers during by-elections in line with the rules during general elections.

This legislation would also improve the voters' list. We want to ensure that Ontarians who should be on the voters' list are on the voters' list. Elections Ontario would be required to update the permanent register of electors for Ontario through targeted registrations using any method deemed appropriate by the Chief Electoral Officer, including enumeration, to ensure it is current. Voters would also be able to confirm online that they are on the list.

I believe that targeted registrations could be even more effective than targeted enumerations. Enumerations require workers to go door to door, which is not necessarily the most effective way to reach electors. Targeted registrations build on existing information in the permanent register of electors and allow flexibility. The chief electoral officer can tailor his approach to communities that are less likely to be accurately included on the voters' list, using methods that actually connect with these voters, such as by e-mail or phone. Apartment buildings or any other communities with high tenancy turnovers can now be accounted for. We are trying to bring more Ontarians to the polls.

I'd like to also say on this topic that, in addition, the Chief Electoral Officer can still choose to use enumeration if he believes that it is the best method to accurately register any of the targeted communities or to update the permanent register of electors at any other time.

Nous désirons fournir des services publics d'un accès aisé. Avec cette loi, le droit démocratique des Ontariens et des Ontariennes à exercer leur droit de vote sera rendu plus facile que jamais grâce à de nouvelles solutions plus souples.

This legislation would allow the testing of new voting or voting-counting methods at a by-election at the Chief Electoral Officer's discretion. On this side of the House, we trust the chief election officer, an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, to move in a reasonable, prudent and thoughtful manner. This legislation proposes to remove the current requirement for party consent before the CEO can test alternative voting methods. More specifically, the CEO would be permitted to test alternative voting methods and equipment at by-elections without having to obtain the agreement of leaders of parties with 12 or more MPPs. At the same time, the CEO would be required to convene an advisory committee of all registered political parties to report on his findings.

If a person or group is going to advertise to influence the outcome of an election, the public has a right to know who is paying for it. This legislation includes new reporting and transparency requirements for third parties that undertake election advertising. Third party advertising would be regulated to enhance electoral transparency by ensuring the public knows who is paying for third party advertising during an election campaign.

If passed, those engaged in election advertising would be required to register with Elections Ontario as soon as their spending reaches \$500. Once a third party is registered, it will be required to submit a report within six months after polling day that describes advertising expenses and contributions. This will include the totals for each class of contributors, and information on all donors who contributed more than \$100. A third party that spends \$5,000 or more must appoint an auditor and submit an auditor's report.

This bill is about good government and updating the electoral process. One such change would be the elimination of the initial advertising blackout period for regularly scheduled general elections. Advertising blackout periods were established to ensure that a government did not have an unfair advantage over other parties with respect to election preparedness. There is no longer a need for this blackout period because the date is known in advance by all parties. The blackout period on polling day and the day before polling day would be maintained. In the event of unscheduled elections, and in by-elections, the initial advertising blackout would remain in place.

Another change would be to the titles of the Chief Election Officer and the Assistant Chief Election Officer. They would be changed to the Chief Electoral Officer and the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer. The titles would be changed for consistency with other jurisdictions and to reflect the scope of their responsibilities.

Cette loi constitue un premier pas calculé vers des changements à plus long terme dans la façon de tenir des élections. Plusieurs des améliorations mentionnées dans la loi ont été recommandées par le directeur général des élections.

These proposed amendments will enhance the integrity and accessibility of the electoral process without risking disruption to the October election.

Taken together with other key democratic renewal initiatives, including the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform and our recently passed referendum legislation, the provisions to modernize elections in Ontario will contribute significantly to our renewed vision of Ontario's democracy—a democracy which is inclusive, participatory, transparent and accountable.

I'm very proud to stand in support of this bill and urge all members of this Legislature to join me in doing the same.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm glad to join the conversation today as the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal. It is my pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 218, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007.

The bill being debated today, if passed, would make a real difference by making it easier for Ontarians to vote and to enhance the integrity of the electoral process. The proposed legislation is as a result of a report authored by Chief Election Officer John Hollins, prepared after the 2003 election. In it, he worried about the decline in voter turnout that was caused by "barriers" in election laws.

This legislation will allow us to address some of those barriers and flaws, and that's why we've proposed to make the criteria for selecting polling locations clearer and make explicit that accessibility requirements should be considered.

We've included additional language that would prescribe criteria for selecting polling locations. As well, we have included additional criteria which ensures compliance with the Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This legislation, if passed, would make it clear that Elections Ontario must consider location capacity, familiarity and geographic barriers. Presently, polling locations need only be centralized and convenient. This legislation will make voting easier and more accessible for all Ontarians. We've also introduced amendments based on recommendations made by the Chief Election Officer that would allow us to reduce confusion at the ballot box by listing party affiliation beside each candidate's name. As well, this legislation, if passed, would require providing proof of identity before making your ballot mark, to help uphold the integrity of our electoral process.

1620

Another barrier to electoral participation is time, which is why we will be extending the deadline for voting from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. and increasing advance poll days to 13. This legislation will modernize elections and make it easier for all Ontarians to vote so that we can ideally increase voter turnout from 56.8%, which was 2003's outcome. We want to help Elections Ontario reach their realistic, reachable target of a 74% voter turnout.

One of the things we learned from the British Columbia referendum was that many people weren't quite sure what they were voting for in the referendum. We want to ensure that Ontarians understand what they're voting for at the polls, leading up to our province's first referendum since 1921. That's why this legislation will empower Chief Electoral Officer John Hollins with the freedom and the explicit authority to undertake a comprehensive, non-partisan public education and communications campaign. The chief elections officer will also be given the necessary funds to run a successful education program and campaign that will help the public understand the referendum question on the mixed member proportional voting system. Mr. Hollins will also have the power to explore modernized voting methods and launch pilot projects during by-elections to explore new technologies like online voting or voting at electronic kiosks, which currently are used in many municipal elections.

Bill 218 proposes that the Chief Electoral Officer be required to conduct a post-election survey to get feedback on the voting experience. These results would provide insight as to whether electors in a general election experience problems or barriers in voting. Additionally, the Chief Electoral Officer will be required to convene and consult with an advisory committee representing all of Ontario's registered political parties. The mandate would be to discuss administrative and

legislative issues of critical interest to Elections Ontario and registered political parties.

We believe that improving the voters list and ensuring that eligible voters are on this list is paramount. The accuracy of the permanent register of electors would be improved if this legislation is passed. Elections Ontario would be required to update the permanent register of electors, and the Chief Electoral Officer would be required to conduct targeted registration programs in the years in which regularly scheduled general elections are to be held. The chief Electoral Officer would also be required to provide new voter information to school boards for distribution to students approaching that critical voting age.

The permanent register of electors is clearly a list that is constantly in flux. Therefore, we've provided a number of criteria for targeting those efforts at the people most likely to be left off the register or improperly left on it. This would include capturing mobile populations, registering electors who are new citizens and young people who are voting for the very first time, and possibly removing those who are no longer able to vote. A number of techniques will be provided for carrying out a targeted registration program. Enumeration can be used for part or all of a riding as well as other methods that may be more effective and economical for target populations. The Chief Electoral Officer would have the freedom to decide which technique is more likely to be productive in achieving this goal.

Accountability of the electoral system would be strengthened by requiring the Chief Electoral Officer to provide an annual report to the Speaker of the Assembly. This would allow the CEO to make timely recommendations in his annual report with respect to enhancing accessibility for those who experience difficulties in voting. The investigative power of the chief elections officer would also be increased if this legislation was passed. It would contribute to enhancing security measures around the electoral process.

The McGuinty government continues to be a leader in advancing an ambitious democratic renewal agenda. Our government is committed to engaging more Ontarians in the electoral system. We're working to reduce voter cynicism and increase voter turnout. Encouraging meaningful participation in Ontario's democracy is the core of our government's democratic renewal agenda. Here are just a few of our government's accomplishments.

We established the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. For the first time in our province's history, we've given Ontarians the opportunity to participate in a full, open debate on the electoral system we inherited, and on May 15 the assembly will submit its final recommendation in a report to the Legislative Assembly.

As well, we established the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform, a parallel citizens' assembly process for Ontario's high school students.

Our government recently passed historic legislation that ensures that if a referendum on electoral reform is

chosen by Ontarians, we will have a legitimate process in place that will provide a clear outcome.

We've amended the province's election laws and set predictable scheduled election dates because we believe citizens prefer knowing when elections will be held. Provincial elections will be held every four years. Ontario's next provincial election is just around the corner and will be held on October 10, 2007.

We've improved the transparency of our political process by requiring real-time public disclosure of political contributions of \$100 and more to political parties and leadership candidates, retroactive to January 1, 2004. These actions have contributed to making Ontario a leader in transparency and accountability. Our real-time disclosure is the first of its kind in Canada and allows Ontarians quick and easy access by tracking contributions through the Internet. We believe that citizens should know how political parties are financed.

We've preserved 11 ridings in the north and increased the number of southern ridings from 92 to 96. As a result, Ontarians in the next provincial election will send 107 members of provincial Parliament to Queen's Park: 11 for the north and 96 for the south.

We believe that every region in Ontario is significant and has an important role to play in building a strong and prosperous province. We also believe that in order to do so, every region needs to be represented in this Legislature.

This legislation strikes a balance. It makes a real, tangible improvement in the process but it does not risk disrupting the upcoming election. I urge members of this House to support Bill 218.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to respond to the minister responsible for democratic renewal and the member from Brampton Centre on Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts.

I think actions speak greater than words. These days around the Legislature, what seems to be happening with just about every government bill is time allocation. That's where the government basically passes a motion that shuts down and is very specific about the amount of time to be debated on any given government bill. We see that with the referendum bill of all bills. It was time-allocated, and now recently we see that with Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act. On that one, the main message I was receiving as the critic was that there were many, many different groups out there that wanted to be able to come before a committee and get their views known on the bill, and preferably around the province. But the government passed the time allocation motion that basically gives two days in Toronto for public input on that bill. Then we see the water bill, Bill 198, which is, I believe, supported by all the parties here in the Legislature. That one has been time-allocated. And what are we doing tonight? Another time allocation motion this evening on Bill 212, an education bill.

1630

I guess the question to be asked is, why all these time allocation motions? I think the answer is that the government doesn't want to be staying around here at Queen's Park any longer than it has to, particularly with all the questions being asked about the Liberal slush fund and the processes involved in that Liberal slush fund. The government has decided to shut down Queen's Park, get these bills they need for their election passed, get out of here and start campaigning.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the government, I have a number of concerns with respect to Bill 218, both the contents in the bill and about what isn't in the bill, especially after some of the promises the Liberals made in the last election around electoral reform. Let me focus on one of those in my response time. This is the section in Government That Works for You that's entitled "Reducing the Influence of Money in Politics." It says as follows:

"Under the Harris-Eves government, money has too much influence and you have too little. They raised donation limits to unprecedented levels and virtually eliminated spending restrictions on political parties. They spent more money on election campaigns and leadership contests than any party in Ontario history.

"Rules for political contributions and expenditures should not be set by those who can benefit. You will set limits on the role of money in politics."

It goes on: "The Harris-Eves government opened the door to big money in Ontario politics. They effectively eliminated spending limits. They increased contribution ceilings by nearly 80% and more than doubled the limit on tax-deductible corporate political donations....

"We"—this is the Liberals, apparently—"believe that public decisions must be made in the public interest, not in the interests of a few well-financed political supporters. That is why we will give you real power to decide what role money should play in the political process....

"Limits on raising and spending money should not be limited to the brief few weeks of an election campaign. In modern politics, much of the 'campaign' spending occurs before the election is even called.

"Citizens' juries will be authorized to establish spending and contribution limits to apply to both pre-election spending and party leadership contests."

The government does zero, zip, nada, nothing with respect to the promises it made around spending limits and contribution limits. My, my, what a difference from when they were in opposition and when they were in government and their response to spending money during election campaigns. I wonder why that is.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): First of all, it's a privilege to follow the Honourable Marie Bountrogianni and her parliamentary assistant, Linda Jeffrey, with regard to the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007.

As you'll appreciate, democracy being one of the fundamental tenets of our society, it's worth strengthening, it's worth furthering, it's worth legislating for, and

in fact, as some brave Canadians have taught us, it's worth dying for.

So that's why it is our collective, and perhaps inherited, responsibility to move on issues such as the extension of democracy; for example, the idea of making it easier to vote, the idea of really extending the democratic choice to individuals by extending polling hours, by increasing the number of advance polls from six days to 13 days, and by establishing additional accessibility criteria for polling locations. This is just part and parcel and small examples, small measures, that will hopefully enhance the democratic participation rate and potential across Ontario.

The other thing that's not being particularly highlighted that I think should be is that once our citizens' assembly comes back and reports on its electoral reform mandate, the Chief Electoral Officer, as you know, will receive the mandate and the opportunity to actually engage in a voter information campaign across Ontario. I think together with the extension of the democratic ability, for example, the polling hours that I've just mentioned, part and parcel with the educational campaign and a number of the other measures that are contained within this particular package—for example, the updating of the permanent register of electors of Ontario, the voting lists, if you will—this is a very important law and another important step in the renewal of democracy in Ontario.

Mr. John Yakubski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I had the opportunity to listen to the minister responsible for democratic renewal and her parliamentary assistant. I'm going to be speaking to this in more detail shortly, but I did want to say that my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka raised an interesting issue with regard to how it's always a bit rich when we have the minister responsible for democratic renewal speaking. It kind of speaks to how we treat the members in this House and how we treat the process in this Legislature. Of course, tonight for the umpteenth time we're going to be debating another—yes, that's right—another time allocation motion on the part of this government.

My friend from Nickel Belt talked about how the words of these people were so different when they were running for office in 2003 from what we're actually getting out of them today. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about election financing, democratic reform, how you treat members in this House, civility or all of those kinds of things. The same thing was applied to the issue of time allocation motions. You've heard in the past where we've read reams of quotes from current members of the Liberal cabinet speaking out against time allocation motions. But they can't move quickly enough now. They're coming in so fast and furious now, at the end of this legislative session, that we can hardly keep track of them. Time allocation motions are coming faster than new weather reports from the weather channel. It's just boom, boom, boom; continuous. I don't know what we're going to do about it.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Brampton Centre, who has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Etobicoke North and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments. I think every member in this House does want a high voter turnout when they're not worrying about the partisan piece we collectively get drawn into in this House when we're debating. We all ran, maybe for the first time in this House—I ran municipally four times. Getting voter turnout raised was always a challenge. Municipally, in my community of Brampton, it's been 23% when it's been a good election. That's when there's a mayoralty race.

You don't feel that you have the endorsement of your community without a high voter turnout. Although you sit here and you make decisions for them, it really does help to know that you have the encouragement and support of the majority of the residents in your riding. As most of us here represent in excess of 100,000 people, it really does help to have a number of people behind you and supportive of your constituency out there, voting on election day.

We believe that the measures we've taken in this legislation will be more helpful. It's tweaking the election process. It's not dramatic, but it's a significant group of little changes that will make a big difference to our commuting public. If you've ever been in a voting station, the majority of people come in after 5:30, so we know that about 75% of the voters are coming in after work. We're going to make it easier for them. We recognize that their time is valuable, but their vote is valuable. You need to spend some time on this. It hasn't been significantly tweaked in a long time. I think it takes courage to make a change.

I look forward to more comments in this House and I appreciate all the comments today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Yakubuski: I believe we have unanimous consent for the lead to be stood down at this time?

The Acting Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent to stand down the lead from the official opposition. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

1640

Mr. Yakubuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 218 this afternoon. I'm going to get to it shortly, but I want to say that this is another one of these last-minute things on the part of this government, where they seem not to have had a very good plan. Suggestions for this legislation came out of a report that came out of the Chief Election Officer's office in 2004. I guess I would ask, what took you so long? Why have you waited until the 11th hour before the election to bring this before the House, which doesn't give us an opportunity to legitimately debate this and send it to proper consultations and committee—because you know the government's going to time-allocate this, as they've been doing everything else.

But I just want to leave that for a minute. I beg the indulgence of the House on this, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to bring the House's attention to the fact that the Pembroke Lumber Kings Junior A hockey team in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on the weekend were crowned the champions of the Fred Page Cup. Some 300 residents of Pembroke and area and supporters of the Lumber Kings made the trip to St. Jerome, Quebec, to support them through the tournament weekend. As I said, the Lumber Kings emerged victorious in the championship game, 5-2 over the St. Jerome Panthers.

As a result of winning the Fred Page Cup, the Lumber Kings are going out to Prince George, BC, to compete in the Royal Bank Cup, which is the top six tier-two Junior A teams across the country, which will crown a supreme champion for all of tier-two Junior A throughout the country. These are the eastern Canada champions now; we're looking forward to them being successful in all of Canada. I hope that all members of the House join me in supporting them. I want to congratulate the Lumber Kings and all of the members of their executive and coaching staff: Sheldon Keefe, head coach and general manager; assistant coaches Sean Peyton and Jeff Patterson; operations manager Mary Ann—better known as “MAT”—Taman.

I have to tell you: MAT has had me sing the national anthem at a number of Lumber Kings games over the last couple of years, particularly the ones this year that were singled out as Raging Red Fridays, when the troops of CFB Petawawa and, in fact, all our troops serving our country in various theatres but particularly in Afghanistan would be honoured at those games. It was an honour for me, as it is any time when I get a chance to sing the national anthem, but particularly when we're honouring our brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I wanted to list the names of the players on this team, because it is important to give you some indication of the valley connection. The ones that come from the valley, I will mention their home. Mavric Parks, Eganville, Ontario; Brent Mackie; Jeff Rodell; Matt Rhymer; Ryan Sullivan; Max Hovey; Keith Clarke, Pembroke; Ben Reinhardt, Arnprior; Brad Townsend; Sean Crozier, Renfrew; Anthony Ventura; Scott Campbell, Navan; Patrick Barney, Nepean; Eric Selleck; Chris Laganieri; Zach Wilson of Arnprior; Jeremi Lapierre; Tim Okicki; Brandon Richardson; Jeremy Gates; Matt Montgomery of Pembroke; Steve Omelko; Brad Wilson, Orleans; Owen Kelly; Brandon Jackson of Cobden; Adam Brace of Cobden; and Paul Beckwith.

Congratulations to all of these young men, and we wish them the very, very best in Prince George.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Especially the Crozier.

Mr. Yakubuski: I see that the member from Essex was particularly taken by the reference to Sean Crozier from Renfrew. He's probably claiming a relation there somehow. I'm going to have to get on that hockey website to see whether the member from Essex had a hockey career before he came here.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It's in the genes.

Mr. Yakubuski: It's in the genes. He looks like an athlete, I must say. He certainly has risen to his feet very quickly sometimes when he's been in the Speaker's chair and he may have thought that I might have been out of line. He's been very quick to rise, so he probably is an athlete of some renown.

But let's get back to the matter at hand. As I said, I'm very concerned that this government would take so long to bring this bill to the Legislature, when they were aware that it was suggested and needed over two and a half years ago, based on a report from the Chief Election Officer.

Substantively, we're in agreement with many things in this bill. I want to touch on a number of them.

The identification side of it: I think the minister is absolutely right. It's something that a lot of people have been asking for, including members of our party. If you look back to the previous federal election, a number of people, it was said, illegitimately voted in that election because nobody was checking IDs, nobody was doing anything. They just came and said, "I'm so-and-so," and "Here's your ballot, away you go," and Bob's your uncle—or maybe Bruce is your uncle; I don't know. So there was some real concern about voter fraud in that election.

I think it is absolutely reasonable to expect that if someone is going to exercise the privilege granted them to elect a member of Parliament or provincial Parliament, which would determine the makeup of the next government, we should take every measure possible to ensure that that person is a legitimate voter. We don't want to discourage people from voting; in fact, we want to encourage people to come out and vote. That's something that is very, very important. But an illegitimate vote is worse than no vote at all. So we have to make sure that we take the steps that are necessary to ensure that those people who are voting have the legitimate right to vote. I think that's something that this bill, to some degree, does address.

There are many things in this bill that we're going to have to get to committee, get some consultation on, get down past the veneer and into the meat of the matter here so that we can actually be sure of what—you know the old saying, "The devil is in the details"? We want to get to those because some of them we plainly don't understand at this point yet, but we're trying to get some of that information. That's where committee and public hearings are always very, very valuable.

The issue of polls being open that extra hour: I think that's a good move as well. There will be some adjustments.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): They may get stiffed in Kenora.

Mr. Yakubuski: Yes. One of the concerns is about the length of time it takes to report those voting results after the polls close, and my friend from Niagara Centre very correctly pointed out, what about a riding like Kenora-Rainy River? Whoa, that's big. It's a challenge

at the best of times to get those results in in a timely fashion. If you're closing those polls at 9 o'clock, are we going to be able to have those results in in time to ensure that those will be available?

Interjection.

Mr. Yakubuski: Oh, Kenora is closing earlier?

Interjection: It's a different time zone.

Mr. Yakubuski: Oh, that's right.

Mr. Kormos: That means they have a shorter time frame. They can't vote as late into their day—

Mr. Yakubuski: Good point. The member for Niagara Centre has pointed out—and I recall when I made a couple of visits up to Atikokan that you actually go into a different time zone when you get up there. So that is an additional concern and we'll have to see how that's going to be addressed.

The issue of third party advertising: I think that's a good one. If you recall, in the 2003 election, there was this really quite disgusting, unseemly campaign put out. They claimed to be the coalition of families, but as it turned out it was actually well-financed, high-powered union groups that came out with a campaign. It was a terrible caricature of the then Premier, Ernie Eves, and very insulting.

1650

The Liberals often refer to the ill-conceived advertising that went on in the 1993 federal election and how the then-challenger for the Prime Minister's position was portrayed by the Conservative Party. That, certainly, was something that was regrettable. However, they did something just as unseemly in 2003 by getting this union group calling themselves the coalition of families spending all of this money to try to make Ernie Eves look in the most unflattering light. This law—because, you see, they're the government now. As I was saying about the member for Nickel Belt saying, "It's amazing how they change when they're in government from when they were in opposition and when they were campaigning. It's the things they promise and the things they're going to do."

Mr. Crozier: It's amazing how they go from government to opposition.

Mr. Yakubuski: The member for Essex makes a reference to how they change when they go from opposition to government. I don't know. I've only sat in opposition, and I must say that this government now that was in opposition—boy oh boy, it's just amazing how time has switched them. They could be called the party of 180 degrees, because everything has turned around 180 degrees. But you see, now that we're coming into an election where they're the government and they're going to be answerable for their pitiful record, they want to make sure that there's nobody out there gunning for them. We're going to be, and I know that my friends from the NDP are going to be gunning for them. That's figuratively speaking, Mr. Speaker. I want to ensure that you understand that. But they want to ensure that there's no third party out there that could covertly target the Liberal government, and this bill should take care of that.

When they're in opposition after the election, I hope they don't come out and say, "We want this bill changed because now we're back in opposition and we want to get back into government so we're going to have to take another crack at this third party advertising thing." So I hope they don't do that. The payoff, of course, came after the election for those big-powered unions when the government changed the legislation with regard to the registration of unions and took out the time-tested democratic tradition of a secret ballot and brought in, "Just sign the card and you're going to be okay." That was a payoff. That was a payback from the Liberals for all of the help that they got during the campaign. This is going to make it a little more difficult for anyone to do that. I'll give them credit; that's a good thing. They got their election win and they're all happy and now they're changing the rules and that's good, because now these rules will fit for everybody. I think that the disclosure rules with regard to third parties and all of those kinds of things are certainly something that we can support.

The minister and the parliamentary assistant—the member for Brampton Centre, correct? Yes. I'm pretty good on those ridings, but I'm not 100% certain yet. The member was talking about Bill 155 and the referendum act and whatever we're going to do with the citizens' assembly that studied the possibility of electoral reform for some time and has now reported back and made a choice. The government is playing pretty coy with this, even though most of their members don't want anything to do with MMP. The Minister of Finance wouldn't touch it with a 20-foot pole. He has used all the 10-foot poles to try to keep them away from the Adscam mess they've got with regard to the Liberal slush funds. He now has 20-foot poles, and he won't touch this. He wouldn't want to touch this with a 20-foot pole, but that's the Minister of Finance.

It raises a number of interesting things, the recommendations from the citizens' assembly, with regard to mixed member proportional. It would mean that there would be now 90 elected members to this assembly. Not 103, as there are today, or 107, as there will be after the election of October 10, but there would be 90. There would be an additional 39 members chosen off a list presented by the party leaders. The folks in northern Ontario and rural Ontario know what that's going to mean to them: They ain't going to be on the list. Those folks won't be on the list, so how does their representation go? I could ask the member for Timmins—James Bay and the member for Nickel Belt and other members in the north: How is this going to affect the north? If you've got 11 members after this next election, you're not going to have 11 members in any new-configured Parliament. So if you're talking about representation from the north, I think you've got to take another look at this system.

The other principle that most of the people I represent hold very true is the fact that they actually get to pick the person who's going to represent them at Queen's Park. They want to directly elect that person. They don't

believe that members who are answerable to no constituents back home—not just one or two or three or four, but 39 members of this assembly. I'm not sure where we're going to put them. We're going to have to get smaller chairs, I guess, or all go on a diet. Thirty-nine members would be chosen off party lists. The people I represent in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke ask themselves, "Why would people be going to Parliament who are answerable to only one person, and that's the leader of the party who gave them the plum assignment to come?" You don't have to spend your weekends going to events and mingling with your constituents. It's something we like to do. That's how we keep in touch and understand the lives of the people we represent. Oh, no; we have 39 people who would spend their weekends flitting around the city here and enjoying the sights. And while the Legislature sits, they'd come back in here and collect their paycheque and wonder who they're representing. And that's an improvement over what we've got?

There's a lot of work to do to improve what we've got, and most of it should start right here. I'll tell you one place where the government could start. They could start by stopping. Hear that, Mr. Speaker? They could start by stopping the stonewalling that has been going on in this House with regard to the legitimate questions being posed to them by the opposition, both us and the members of the New Democratic Party. They could start by stopping that stonewalling. They could start by giving some answers. They could start by saying yes to the Auditor General so that we could get to the bottom of this mess that they have created because they decided that the partisan interests of their members are more important than the real interests of the people of the province of Ontario. That's another thing that people believe in. They believe that a government should be accountable, that a government should be willing to stand up and say, "This is what we did. This is why we did it. This is the process we use. There's our justification, and here are the results. We can say that program was right because we can measure the results." In this slush fund, a.k.a. sponsorship whatever, votes-buying scandal, Liberal Party membership drive—whatever you want to call it—they can't say yes to any of those questions. What they can say is yes. You know what? The people are saying, "Yes, the government is wrong; the opposition is right," and the people want answers.

Interjections.

Mr. Yakabuski: I hear the chuckling over there. The members think it's right to dole out money with no accountability. I'll tell you, the people in my riding who've had to apply for Trillium grants over the years would say, "Accountability is a good thing, but by God, there's a lot of work involved in that process." This government wants to skip those steps and just put the money into the pockets of Liberal-friendly organizations—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke had a number of things to say. Let me focus on

one where he and I are probably not in agreement. That has to do with the result of the deliberations by the citizens' assembly.

1700

I am a member, of course, who firmly believes that what the province desperately needs in terms of encouraging more people to vote is a system of proportional representation where every vote will count. Right now, with first past the post, far too many people don't participate in the process because they don't think their vote matters. I think a system of proportional representation would allow people certainly to vote for whoever is in their riding, if they like them particularly, but aren't so enamoured with the party policy, and also to cast a second ballot perhaps with the party of their choice. So they could be splitting their vote in that particular way.

What really concerns me about that is that while I'm very supportive of what the citizens' assembly came forward with, the fact of the matter is that the government has essentially ensured that it's not going to matter what work they did and what they came forward with. To have a referendum where a 60% majority has to vote in favour is setting us up for disaster. It's doomed to fail. We saw that very clearly in British Columbia, where a 60% majority was required, and of course that wasn't met—close, but it wasn't—and so there isn't a change in the voting system in the province.

Secondly, it was very clear in British Columbia that the question that was on the referendum was determined by the assembly, was voted on by the assembly, and we see here in Ontario that it's not going to be the assembly that votes on such an important question. No, it's going to be cabinet in the backroom that sets the question unilaterally and then has the Chief Electoral Officer put it onto the referendum itself. That is totally different, and certainly not very democratic by any stretch of the imagination, when one is contemplating such a major change to voting in the province.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): It's a privilege and a pleasure to participate in Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts. I commend the minister for bringing this bill forward.

I had the privilege of being a member of the select committee of the Legislature of this province which visited other jurisdictions about how to increase our voter turnout. This will, if passed, help this government to make an effort to increase voter turnout.

I want to focus on one area, which is about the advertising blackout period. If Bill 218 is passed, it will eliminate the initial advertising blackout period for regularly scheduled elections. As the election date, which is October 10, 2007, is known to all the parties in advance, the elimination of the initial advertising period for regularly scheduled elections would help us to eliminate the period. However, the blackout period on election day and the day before would be maintained as in the past.

I think it's a good bill and, if passed, would help people to go and vote and participate in the democratic process of this province.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I always listen with interest and a set of earplugs when the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is speaking. At the beginning, he was talking more about a hockey game, and this bill is all about An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts.

In fact, he did go on to cover a number of the issues, which I think is surprising. This is a government that was elected under the mandate of renewed democracy, if you will—democratic renewal, transparency, accountability—and in the last two weeks we've seen no such thing. It's a shame, quite frankly. It's an affront to the House, you might say.

I also recall that they've had about three bills—actually, I think this is the fourth bill—on election reform and election process reform. More recently—and I'm not surprised, but this bill may also be time-allocated—Bill 155 was all about the referendum and it was time-allocated. What a conundrum if you think about it: a bill on democratic renewal being time-allocated, which, for the viewer, means they've shut down the debate. It's a contradiction in the very debate that we're having.

This bill also has some troubling sections when you look at it. If you look at just the explanatory notes, you see that there's going to be an allowance for voting by use of other methods. This can be done without an agreement of the party leaders. This is an exception to the bill. There's also an understanding with respect to the identification of candidates on the ballot and their party affiliation. There's a bill that allows a new structure for a number of new parties, which is troubling as well.

Quite frankly, one part that gets me is that section 114.1 is also about the referendum and the role of the election returning officer, but also, section 37 is eliminating the blackout period for advertising—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): There's enough in this bill to allow any member to speak for fairly long periods of time. There's a couple of provisions—the one that I love is that they're going to be putting the name of the political parties on the ballot. I just wonder what would happen in Mr. Runciman's riding if there was a John Doe from the People's Choice Party and a George Smith from the Popular Communist Party and all of a sudden all those acronyms go at the end in order to confuse the voter. I wouldn't put it past certain people in political parties to make that happen. That's why I've always wondered that this is one of the things the government put in.

The other issue which I think is interesting is that we've been having a bit of a discussion about proportional representation. I will just say that I totally disagree with the comments made by my good friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing in regard to his views on proportional representation.

I was just down in the standing committee and that tells me the need to change this place. We have an initiative in the finance committee now that is going to turn the tax system on mining on its ear. It's going to affect future investment in northern Ontario. Even the government members who know this is a bad idea aren't going to vote against it in committee. Why? Because they've been given marching orders by their minister and by the government to support the clause as is.

At least under proportional representation, the government wouldn't have a clear majority in that committee, as they wouldn't in the House, and we would at least be in a position where all members' voices counted. The government would not be in a clear majority and they would at least have to convince somebody in the opposition to support them. If that didn't happen, the initiative wouldn't pass. What's wrong with that? I call it democracy.

This is where I have a difference of opinion with my friend. Is this model as represented by the citizens' assembly the best? I might have done it differently, quite frankly, but I think it's certainly a step forward from what we've got now.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. I'll return to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments of the members from Nickel Belt, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, Durham and Timmins-James Bay. I don't have time to touch on all of them, but I did want to touch on a couple of points.

The member for Durham talked about the party affiliation on the ballot. That is a situation that lends itself—and I do appreciate the member for Ottawa Centre who campaigned on that. I think he actually had a private member's bill at one time to deal with party affiliation being on the ballot. But it does open itself up to all kinds of mischievous things, as the member for Durham started to talk about but ran out of time, where people could play games with the—maybe that was the member for Timmins-James Bay who raised that—names on the ballot, where you would have party names that were very similar to established party names to cause some confusion on the part of the voter and/or maybe have someone run who has a similar surname. But if you had the two of them together, there could certainly be some confusion on the part of the voter, not that there isn't that today sometimes with similar surnames.

The other thing I wanted to talk about: The member for Timmins-James Bay talked about our differences on electoral reform and what the makeup of the assembly might be, but we are in absolute agreement, I believe, on the need to reform this chamber itself. His alluding to what's going on in committee is just another example of where this government uses its majority to crush the opposition, to crush any opposition to the shenanigans they're up to. The committee that had an opportunity to put this before the auditor voted it down because their party said to vote it down. That's not democracy.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I would ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead, as our critic is currently in committee.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay is seeking unanimous consent of the House to stand down the leadoff speech. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: It's fitting that we're debating a bill that deals with the electoral system and generally with democracy on a day when yet again, in question period today, we were demanding answers from the Minister of Citizenship and other ministers of the government when it came to this whole slushgate fund. We have a situation, Speaker, as you know—you were here at question period; you've seen it—where the opposition, the media and the public are asking some pretty serious questions. How is it that groups across Ontario could have received money without application, have dollars shovelled out of the ministry door into the bank accounts of these organizations without ever having to make an application? And then finding out that the relationship between the applicants and the Liberal Party is very tight and close indeed.

We've been asking in this House, first at committee—we asked the government to support us at public accounts, giving the auditor the opportunity to take a look forthwith at those particular grant applications in order to find out what in fact happened so that we could make sure that doesn't happen again. Number two, we had an opposition day motion in this House yesterday that called on the government to get the auditor to do the same thing. Again, that was voted down by the majority. Today, we stood in the House and we asked the minister, because he has the authority as minister, to have the auditor come in, and the minister refused.

I just say—I think other members in this House would echo me—that there's something passing strange here, that we have a situation where monies were expended without any application whatsoever for the dollars. The dollars showed up in the bank accounts of these organizations. For some of them, the only connection they have to this place is by way of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

The government needs to reflect on that. It needs to think about why it is that it's important that we go to public accounts. For them to reflect better, I would ask at this point for adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1713 to 1743.

The Acting Speaker: Monsieur Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the table.

All those opposed will please rise and be counted by the table as well.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 10; the nays are 35.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I will now return to the member for Timmins–James Bay, who still has the floor.

Mr. Bisson: That was so close; it was unbelievably close on the last vote. I've got to say I was encouraged.

I want members to understand why I moved that particular motion. Quite frankly, it's very simple. As I said earlier, there has been an incident where particular groups in the province of Ontario have received money without application. There was no basic process by which these people had to apply for money. Not only did the money show up in their bank accounts without having a fair application process, but in the end, we found out that some of these groups—and I don't know how many, but we know some—had very deep ties to the Liberal Party of Ontario. We in the opposition, the media and others have been asking questions to the minister responsible for immigration now for a period of two or three weeks. We've asked the Premier and we've asked other members to do the right thing, and that is to refer this matter to the Provincial Auditor so that the Provincial Auditor can take a look at what happened and report back to the Legislature, through the committee, so that we don't repeat it in the future.

Nobody argues that all of these groups aren't in need of help; that ain't the argument—at least, some of them; some of them we're not so sure of. But there has to be a clearer process of application, where everybody has an opportunity to apply fairly. Why not basically post and let people know that at the end of the day, these monies are available? Let there be an application process in place so that every organization has a fair chance to apply, there's a vetting of the applications at the end of the day, and the groups that are most in need would be the ones to get it.

We had a motion in the public accounts committee. The government used its majority to kill that. As a result, the auditor has not been given the mandate. Instead, we've got this motion that the Liberal Party has put through in public accounts that says, "We're going to

report after the next election." That's not good enough. The federal Liberals tried that in the last sponsorship scandal, and quite frankly that didn't work out very well either for the taxpayers of Ontario.

We tried yesterday. We had an opposition motion in this House where we called on the government to get the public accounts committee to get the auditor to do a review. The government used its majority yet again to shut that down. Today my colleague the member from Beaches–East York, my leader and other members from the Conservative opposition asked the minister to do the right thing, and that is to ask the auditor of Ontario to do a review of this issue forthwith and to report back to the House.

I'm just saying to the government, listen, at the end of the day all we're asking is that there's a proper vetting. Call the auditor in, and we will move on with other business in the House, but we need to get to the bottom of this.

I don't think the government properly thought through what the response was. Therefore, I would ask for adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Monsieur Bisson has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1818.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed will please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 4; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being considerably past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until a quarter to 7 tonight.

The House adjourned at 1819.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerk-at-the-Table / Greffier parlementaire: Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo–Wellington	First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Premier Vice-Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	Speaker / Président
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Attorney General / procureur général
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L)	Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Correctional and Emergency Services) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Services correctionnels et situations d'urgence)
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice-Président, Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées

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Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L)	Samia–Lambton	Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
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Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Ajax	
Ferreira, Paul (ND)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie–Lincoln	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales et ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce et au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
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Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services and minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires et ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine

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Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Transports
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjointe parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture and minister responsible for francophone affairs / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / York-Nord	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services (Disabilities) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires (Personnes handicapées)
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjoint parlementaire au premier ministre
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Peterson, Tim (Ind.)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph–Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)
Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Lanark–Carleton	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tory, John (PC)	Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Agriculture and Food) / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Agriculture et Alimentation)
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Deputy opposition House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 1 May 2007

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2007



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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9 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety, when Bill 212 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on general government; and

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, on May 14, 2007, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and May 16, 2007, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon for the purpose of conducting public hearings on the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 p.m. on May 23, 2007. No later than 5 p.m. on May 28, 2007, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than May 29, 2007. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such

time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, on the day the order for third reading for the bill is called, the time available for debate shall be one hour, and the time shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 352. Does the government House leader wish to lead off the debate?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I will, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

We are dealing with the timetable for Bill 212. I want to, first of all, commend the House leader of the official opposition for endeavouring to accommodate things. We had some interesting discussions with the three parties in the House and attempted to come to a conclusion that was satisfactory to all. I think that, in good faith, there was an opportunity to try to do so. It is not always possible to do so. I've observed this over the years: that the closer you get to the date of an election, the more difficult it is to find a suitable time that is agreed to by all three parties.

1850

The allocation motion allocates a certain time for the debate. We have had three days of second reading, which I think is substantial on a bill where I know that all three parties are in agreement. I think all three parties are going to vote for the bill; that's my knowledge, anyway. So I would have thought that perhaps there was an opportunity where we could have agreed to a timetable. That did not prove to be the case. But, as I say, it wasn't as a result of people not trying to do so. There was a definite effort, I think, on the part of the three parties to agree to it. That could not be agreed to. So in order to have some idea of when bills are going to conclude, particularly after they've had three days of second reading—and that's the reading on principle, second reading, where all three parties have expressed agreement with the bill—that perhaps it could go to committee, and we have allocated

time for committee: two days for committee. That's something that wasn't always the case with time allocation motions. My friend from Owen Sound—the area of Owen Sound, at least—would remember that there were time allocation motions that allowed for no committee time in some cases, and no third reading. This bill allows for two days of committee time, and I think that's a good allocation of time on a bill where we have not really anticipated that there would be much in the way of—in fact, in some of our discussions we thought that perhaps even one day might have accommodated the hearings necessary. But we've put in two days for that.

We've put in time for third reading as well and, in doing so, have allocated time equally so that each recognized party in the House has an opportunity to debate an equal amount of time. Though it is a motion which allocates a specific time, I think the government has tried to be fair in allocating that particular time.

So we see a different circumstance. My good friend the opposition House leader will remember when he was part of a government that often didn't want to give committee time or third reading, and I understood his frustration in those days. I spoke to my good friend the member for Nepean—Carleton—Norm Sterling, as we know him on a personal basis—and I know he used to want to tear his hair out over the fact that the opposition—

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds—Grenville): He can't afford to do that now.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: The House leader says he can't afford to do that now.

But I can understand the frustration of the government House leader of the day, because I can certainly admit this today—this could be a confession today to my friends on the other side—but the opposition in those days was not always as co-operative as it might be. I know that'll shock you to hear that, having sat on the other side. So, as a result, the government would bring in a motion which would give specific time for the bill to be discussed.

This bill is a pretty moderate bill. I don't think it has radical change in it. I heard an excellent speech, by the way, last night from the member for—let's see; I'm going to look this up because it's very important that I get it right, the riding, and we're only supposed to use ridings—Simcoe North. I thought he gave a good speech last night in this House, or yesterday. It was either the afternoon or the evening. He gave a very good speech in the House on this particular bill, and he said he was in favour of it and so on. I suspect that we can always expand the time, because I was accused of doing that—probably with some justification, when I was on the other side: of expanding the time to whatever time there was available. Again, all these confessions come, as they say, on the road to Damascus, and these conversions to new approaches.

But I do appreciate that the opposition will be opposed to this. They should vote against it; I always did when I was in opposition. They will speak against it, but I think

that in their heart of hearts they will recognize that we really tried to accommodate them.

I want to, one more time, thank the House leader of the official opposition for endeavouring to come up with a solution along with the government. It just wasn't possible to do so. I would never criticize him, even though he has the right now to criticize the government for this motion.

I thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity for that explanation. I am waiting with anticipation to hear my good friend the House leader of the Conservative Party now.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Runciman: I think the House leader for the government has a mole in our caucus. How did he know that I was going to be the next Speaker?

I obviously have to comment on some of the remarks put on the record by the government House leader and indicate that indeed we were, in the official opposition, quite prepared to try to reach an accommodation in moving this bill forward in a timely way and try to make this place work in as co-operative a fashion as is possible, given the challenges that I guess we all have to deal with from a political perspective. But I think, as the House leader indicated and as our critic for the Ministry of Education has indicated, who for our part has carriage of this legislation, we are, at the end of the day, going to be supportive of the bill. That was certainly a primary reason for our being prepared to see it move in a timely way through the House in terms of second reading and on to committee. We were quite prepared, and this was indicated to the government, not to look at extended hearings in committee. We weren't prepared, obviously, to make the commitment on third reading because we don't know what's going to come out of committee. We don't know, in terms of people appearing before the committee, the kinds of concerns that may be brought to our attention that we're not aware of at this stage of the process. So it would be, I think, really not appropriate for us to make a commitment in that regard.

I have to assume that the government House leader knew when they approached us in that regard that we can't make those kinds of commitments. Obviously, we have to approach the committee hearings in an open-minded way. Hopefully there are not going to be, in terms of our support for this legislation and I think the third party support, significant concerns or significant problems. But if there are some that we are not aware of at this point in time, we have to reserve the right to ensure that those are addressed in an adequate way. So for us to make some kind of very restrictive commitment in terms of third reading is totally inappropriate.

I think we went a long way to try and make this place work. I'm not blaming the House leader. I know he does the best he can do and that he has certain forces he has to deal with in terms of how this place should operate. At the end of the day, he's not the final authority, and I respect that. I understand that. It certainly in no way diminishes my respect for the job he does or the way he presents himself to us and the case he makes before us.

That mutual respect is, I think, going to continue, because I understand the challenges.

Interjection.

Mr. Runciman: You understand the kinds of aggravations I have to put up with as well from the opposition benches, challenges on a regular basis from my old friend. We've been together for a long time, but still it never—

Interjection: —gets ugly.

Mr. Runciman: No, it never gets ugly, but I'm not sure. I'm never as aggressive as my colleague feels I should be. There's never an answer. He is a significant player in our caucus and a conscience for us and someone who always is there to make sure that we know his views. I have to say that I respect that as well and I value him as a friend and colleague, and he knows that.

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I don't want to speak to any extended length in terms of the bill itself, because that's not what we're dealing with. We're dealing with a motion here tonight to effectively close off debate or, if you want to be generous, to limit debate and discussion on this legislation. So for anyone who may be tuning in to the parliamentary channel, I want to explain—I guess there's no hockey game on; or there is a hockey game on, so anyone who is tuning in is a real, true aficionado of provincial politics, and we have to respect that. You probably understand what's happening here: that this is a form of closure. The government has decided that they want to get a number of bills through the House as quickly as possible. We can all debate the reasons for that. I think there's some suspicion, on this side of the House anyway, that they want to get out of this place. They've had about four or five weeks now of very difficult times in question period, first with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming scandal, which has never been dealt with by the government in an adequate way in terms of allowing the light to shine on what happened with respect to the operations within the office of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and how they dealt with it, and within the Premier's office with respect to certain officials in his office being involved in trying to ensure that this matter never became a significant issue in the public domain.

So we have been frustrated time and time again, certainly with the lottery and gaming scandal. The last week and a half we've been dealing with the Liberal slush fund scandal—one scandal after another—where millions and millions of tax dollars have been poured out the government doors to, in many respects, organizations and agencies with Liberal connections. We've been trying, again, to shine a light on the processes, how decisions were made, who was involved in those decisions, why they were made, a whole range of questions, which the government has refused to answer.

Earlier today, our legislative colleague the member for Timmins-James Bay moved adjournment of the debate and adjournment of the House when we were dealing with a democratic reform bill. We supported the NDP with respect to ringing the bells on this issue. I have to

say, it ties in with what we've experienced in this House not just for the last week and a half but for the last six or seven weeks, where, when we ask, I believe, our legitimate and important questions, we are stonewalled, effectively stonewalled, by government ministers who have prepared lines. We could speculate on who prepares them, but in some respects I'm sure the fine hand of Warren Kinsella is involved here. But in any event, we never get any real answers to very important and, I think, serious questions.

Also, with respect to the current situation, the slush fund scandal, another option for members of the opposition is the public accounts committee. We asked the public accounts committee to pass a motion to request that the Provincial Auditor, the Auditor General, come in and review the circumstances surrounding the issuance of these monies. Again, that was rejected by the Liberal majority in the committee.

Yesterday, we had an opposition day motion which catalogued the concerns regarding the issuance of these monies, if you will, under the cover of darkness, under the table, with no application process, no approval process, no follow-up audit process. Again, that was defeated by, if you will, the tyranny of the majority, and we were not able to pursue that any further. Every door we've attempted to open has been slammed shut in our face.

I gave a statement earlier today in the House where I clearly indicated the frustration of the opposition parties with respect to this issue and the OLG issue, and that we were going to take a look at what limited tools are available to opposition members to convey our concern about the way we've been dealt with.

I want to indicate our support for the NDP's action today, and I have to put on the record again that this is going to continue. We're going to look at the legislation that is called by the House leader of the government, and, where we feel it's appropriate and based on the failure of the government to respond in any way, shape or form in an adequate fashion to our concerns related to the expenditure of hard-earned tax dollars, we're going to utilize what tools are available to us. They're very limited, as you know, Mr. Speaker. One of them is moving adjournment of debate and another is moving adjournment of the House. We may look at committees, we may look at a number of other limited options available to us, but I can assure you that what we can do, we will do.

I think it's unfortunate, having spent eight years in government and now revisiting opposition and taking a fresh look at how this place operates from the opposite side of the House, and I have to say that we have real problems in this place. Perhaps, being in the government benches, I was too preoccupied with my responsibilities to sit back and reflect on it. I think it's fair to say that all three parties have played a role in the way this place has been transformed over the past 15 or 20 years. When we look at the disaffection and disillusionment amongst the electorate in this province, all of us have a responsibility to carry for what has happened.

If I have any role to play going forward with respect to the positions our party takes, I would like to see extensive changes take place. I would like to see the restoration of the filibuster. We can define a filibuster and we can provide provisions in the standing orders to provide an override. What happens in the US Congress and the US Senate: The filibuster has never been eliminated, but there are override provisions. I'm not sure what the number is, if it's 60% or 75% of the assembly that votes to override a filibuster and that's the end of it. I think we have to look at that kind of a process as well.

My friend mentions committees, and I think this is a significant aspect. If we can look at the structure of committees, I would hope that they could perhaps be equal representation—that may be the ideal—and that we give these committees authority to subpoena witnesses, to call people before them. Right now, the process is convoluted. We have to have a motion from the committee. It has to come and be approved by the assembly to have a Speaker's warrant issued to call someone before a legislative committee. We should give the committees significant independence. I think we have to have equal representation on these committees and give them more authority in terms of the agenda they set and their ability to subpoena and call witnesses to appear before them.

If we start to do these kinds of things, the public is going to start to be re-energized in terms their interest in this place and their hopefully renewed belief that this place really represents the people of Ontario and can really carry forward their concerns and make substantive changes to what's happening in the province of Ontario. Those are growing frustrations on my part.

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I think we sit around the House leaders' table—the three of us are veterans in this place. We've all seen the changes occur, and I think we all, to some degree, share the frustrations. We've all sat in government and we've all spent some time in opposition, and we know the limitations that are placed on individual members of this place. I think we see it at the federal level. We see it at every provincial level across this country, where effectively what has happened is that the real power is with non-elected folks, primarily in the Premier's office, the circle of advisers in the Premier's office, and another group of advisers outside who have the ear of the Premier or the Minister of Finance or other significant players in the government of the day.

They're the people who really make these kinds of decisions that impact the people of Ontario, not the rest of us in this place, not the—what is it?—70 or 80 of us who sit outside of cabinet. We don't make the real, effective changes. Rarely, on occasions, there may be something brought forward by a backbencher on either side of this place that will have an impact, but the real, day-to-day decisions on how this place operates are effectively made by people who have not put their names before the public, who do not have any accountability to the millions of people who pay their taxes and work hard on behalf of all of us in the province of Ontario.

Obviously we're going to be voting against this. I hope there's enough sentiment on both sides of this place, whatever the results are of the October 10 election, that we can work together to find ways to make this place more reflective of the province, the desires and needs of the province and the people of this great province.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): As has been said, the issue before us is closure, not the substance of the bill. We have to look at the context of this particular initiative on the part of the government. This government has something like two months left to run before we recess for the summer, and it may be that the government House leader will correct me and say that there are a few days more here or there, but it's about two months. It's a fair amount of time.

We are in a situation where we seem to be getting bill after bill allocated. I was in a meeting just yesterday, setting hearing times for the water bill. The time is already set. It's a very substantial piece of legislation. It is of consequence to this province; it's of consequence continentally. Debate time has been set; it's finished.

We're in a situation where this government has decided that over the next two months, it's going to allocate as much as it possibly can, and it may be that this is a government that's planning to scoot out of the House much sooner than most of us currently understand to be the schedule.

There are some comments that have been made by people previously about time allocation, and I'll just read a few quotes into the record. Here's a quote from the now Minister of Finance, Mr. Sorbara. This was December 2001: "I stand here today to condemn this time allocation motion and to say to you that—let me put it this way—governments are defeated for two reasons: one, because of what they do, because of the policies they bring forward and the things they do to the people of a place like Ontario, and the second reason they are defeated is the way in which they go about doing them.... This time allocation motion is just another example of why people are so anxious to get to the ballot box in a general election and send them packing."

The current Minister of Finance put it pretty strongly. He also had to say, about the same period, "That's why this time allocation motion is such a tragedy. I certainly will be voting against it."

The now Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in June 2003: "It is shutting off debate. We've got many ... members on this side of the House who want the opportunity to speak on this bill, and that's being denied," and, "Closure is not the way a democratically elected Parliament should operate." I guess, now that he's a minister, he has a different perspective.

Here's another quote, 28 October 2002: "I'm pleased to join this debate as well. Actually, I'm not pleased with the subject matter we're dealing with, which is, of course, another time allocation motion. I know people have heard this before, but I think it's absolutely outrageous the number of times this particular government has used closure, in which it's cutting off the parliamentary debate

that we believe in with our democratic system.” Others have had a chance to speak to this as well.

The current chief government whip, 25 November 2002: “First, in a nutshell, time allocation itself, the reality of what time allocation means: basically, the stopping of debate.... It’s a new device with which this government has been stifling democracy.”

Then, on the same day there’s another comment: “Stop the closure stuff.”

In December: “I rise with some consternation as to whether or not speaking to this bill will have an impact on the government’s decision to use time allocation, so what I want to do first is explain very clearly to the people that time allocation is a tactic used by governments that simply want to remove the opportunity for too much debate, for one of two reasons: They’re fearful of what might be said, or they need to better manage their time in terms of how the legislative agenda and calendar has come apart. So whether it’s the first one or the second one, it’s really irrelevant because the fact is the government shows it’s doing one of two things. It’s either not listening to the people out there ... or this government’s agenda is falling apart and they just simply have to get this legislation passed to prove that they’ve done some work, without any dedication to finding out whether or not the people out there truly want to debate this issue.”

The current chief government whip spoke very well. I would advise him strongly to go back and read his Hansard, listen closely to the words that he used and take the advice of the now Minister of Finance, who talks about how governments can defeat themselves through the—what can I say?—constant use of time allocation measures.

I have to say that those I quoted were not alone. The now government House leader, Mr. Bradley: “How I wish we didn’t have to debate this time allocation motion.... I simply want to say that once again we see the government using its iron fist on the opposition.”

Or Mr. Bradley on 28 November 2001: “Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, unfortunately, to speak on yet another time allocation motion. That is a motion, of course, where debate is choked off in the Legislative Assembly by the dictum of the government; that’s most unfortunate, but it does happen only too often.” Sort of like with the water bill, most recently.

He goes on at another time, on 3 December 2001: “I too will be opposing the time allocation motion.... But I think more and more people should realize that this Legislature has become largely irrelevant in the democratic process in Ontario.

“The member who served at a period of time from 1985 to 1995 probably didn’t recognize the rules when he came back, how badly they’ve been mangled so that the House has become just about irrelevant. That’s unfortunate for all of us in the House. The government whip over there mumbles and grumbles in a gruff voice about this”—I have to say, this is good stuff—“but I tell him, if you ever have the opportunity to sit on this side of the

House, you’ll find out what I’m talking about and why it’s relevant.”

Mr. Bradley, I’m sure, made very well aware, those who are sitting on this side, of what he’s talking about. Again I would advise him strongly to go back to Hansard and read his words.

The current Minister of Agriculture, Mrs. Dombrowsky: “I have to say that it is with regret that I have to stand in my place again today to speak to yet another time allocation motion. I think the point I would like to stress in this debate is that this is probably one of the most significant issues that this House will consider in terms of business on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. The bill was introduced a little more than a week ago”—I think this bill was introduced a little more than a week ago—“and already the government has moved to close debate on this most significant issue.”

The same year, in October: “Here we go again. Sadly, again, we’re here debating a time allocation motion. We’re here talking about all the reasons why we would like to see this bill get full debate in the Legislative Assembly. The government, on the other hand, doesn’t want that debate. They want to shut down debate. They will have one day of hearings on the bill in Toronto on a substantive piece of legislation.

“I know that some of the members opposite are sighing over there and they don’t like the fact that we always stand up and we resent the fact that we have been elected as the voice of the people and so regularly our voice is being stifled by time allocation motions. It seems to be something that government members are very prepared to accept and obviously promote. But I take it very seriously. I think it’s an offence and an affront to the people of Ontario that so regularly this mechanism to stifle debate is used in the Legislative Assembly.”

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Since she was on a roll, I want to read one more of her quotes.

“Sadly, again I stand to speak to a time allocation motion. As a member who was elected on June 3, 1999, I really thought that as a voice for the people of my part of Ontario I would have a reasonable opportunity to speak on their behalf and make points on behalf of the people of Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, as well as the perspective of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party. Here we are again addressing another time allocation motion on a matter of great importance to the people of Ontario.”

It’s always entertaining and instructive to read Hansard, but I want to talk for a moment about the principle of taking time to actually go through legislation, and the reality: changes in information that are made available to government and to members as time passes.

I want to use the example of the proposal to put power lines through my riding of Toronto–Danforth, because I think this is a substantial issue and one where we’ve seen interesting developments every few days in the House and in the media that’s covering it in my riding.

Last November, the Ontario Power Authority published a report on transmission, on future power plans, and in that report, on page 94, it showed an option: a third transmission line coming down through Toronto, down through Scarborough. I'm sure people in Scarborough will be thrilled witless as that power line is built through their neighbourhood, down to Leaside and then down, with a large line covering almost my whole riding, to the Hearn generating station.

On April 3, 2007, this month, the Globe and Mail published an article, "Plan for New Hydro Line Has Opponents Buzzing," and a map for which the Globe and Mail credited Hydro One as its source, showing a power line coming down from Markham through Scarborough.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth—Middlesex): On a point of order, Speaker: I was sure that we were discussing the time allocation motion tonight that had to do with the education bill. I thought that's what we were talking about this evening.

The Acting Speaker: That is indeed what we are discussing tonight.

I would ask the member for Toronto—Danforth to continue.

Mr. Tabuns: I'm talking to the whole principle of why one needs to have adequate debate and adequate time for debate, and to that end I'm putting forward evidence to show that what is said to be true one day by this government may well not be true the day thereafter. On that basis, I feel that I entirely have the right to speak about the evidence before us.

Mr. Wilkinson: Are you for the bill or against it?

Mr. Tabuns: I'm against the bill. Frankly, I'm against the bill in part. I thought I had made that clear, but for those who weren't listening, I'm against the bill.

This time allocation motion is wrong. I don't think it should be adopted. I think it should be chucked out.

I want to note that this is a government that plays very interesting games and, frankly, when you start pointing out what's real, this is a government that gets extraordinarily jumpy.

When the Globe and Mail reported a hydro line going down Pape Avenue in my riding, citing Hydro One as the source of their information, we didn't get any questions from backbenchers to the minister that day—nope. When the Ontario Clean Air Alliance published maps showing lines coming through my riding, we didn't get any questions from backbenchers to the minister. Why? Because the reality is that this is a government that's jumping this way and that.

Last week, we had a question from a backbencher to the minister. The minister said, "Nope, not that." But today in the East York Mirror, a fascinating article saying that although no line was going to be going down Pape—the words being, "That option is now off the table," which leads me to believe that an option was on the table in the past. I think that's fairly good evidence. It isn't that an option was never on the table; it's now off the table. But what is on the table is a power line coming down

through the east end and through my riding. The spokesperson couldn't say in detail where that line would go.

The simple reality is that this is a government that tries to ram things through because they know that evidence will come to light that will undermine their position on a regular basis. We've gone through this, and Mr. Runciman made this case. We're going through this now with the whole debate about slushgate. We have a government that acted entirely improperly, made sure that all its friends knew that there was an opportunity to get at some cash, made sure that when they were questioned, we got tons of obfuscation. We were told that all kinds of people were informed when, in fact, in my riding people weren't informed. In other ridings, people weren't informed. There was no application process. There was simply—and we are yet to have all the details—some sort of obscure, in a black box, political process in which some people, some organizations were allocated money and others weren't. That is instructive. That is a part of how this government operates. It's a government that takes people in one direction while it's actually doing work in the other direction.

So when you actually speak against a time allocation bill, one needs to bring in the evidence, one needs to show that, in fact, this government is engaged in that kind of distribution or throwing of red herrings in the air to try to confuse, distract and, frankly, obscure the reality for people.

I know that some of the backbenchers on the other side get very cranky when I talk about this hydro line, and my guess is that their constituents are going to get extremely cranky about this hydro line when public meetings start happening in their ridings, as they will. I know that they will do everything they can to obscure that reality, but they're soon going to have a fight on their hands with their constituents because, instead of listening to their constituents, they're taking marching orders from the Minister of Energy.

So you can obscure all you want. You can put in as much closure as you want. The truth will out, and the truth is that you need to ram things through because the longer you're in the House, the bigger the problems you have. You don't want things coming out.

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns: They don't like it. They're getting cranky. I can hear them back there. They don't like it when you point out what's going on. That's simply reality.

It's interesting to me as well that we hear all kinds of stuff about incineration. It's the same thing. We get statements from the Premier that incineration has zero impact; zero pollution is produced. The simple reality is that that's not true.

John Barber wrote a very enlightening and useful article in the Globe this past weekend citing studies done in Niagara, studies published in Solid Waste and Recycling Magazine about the simple fact that "making power from Ontario garbage will be far dirtier and more

dangerous than making power from coal—the dirtiest fuel in current use.”

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns: No, I'll actually read Mr. Barber, because there's some doubt. What he said:

“The Niagara experience not only demonstrates the new reality of inciner-omics, it sharply contradicts trendy beliefs that the technology, currently euphemized as ‘waste-to-energy,’ has somehow become clean and green since the days when a more sensible generation banned it. Without even considering the bugbear of dioxin, industry data gleaned from the environmental assessment of the proposed Niagara facility show that making power from Ontario garbage will be far dirtier and more dangerous than making power from coal—the dirtiest fuel in current use.”

Well, gee, what about that, eh? What a shocker. Here's a government willing to set aside environmental assessments for incineration plants, and then when the stuff comes out that it's very dirty, what you get is obscurity, obfuscation.

I think there are a lot of reasons for the opposition and the third party to be upset with the performance of this government. There's no question: slushgate; very bad performance on environmental issues; very problematic approaches to energy—problematic. I'm far too generous; far too generous. But I have to say, this is a government that provokes objection. This is a government that provokes anger and outrage. If you look at this situation in which the government didn't allow inquiry into slushgate, blocked access of the auditor, would not move to bring in the auditor, made sure that friends were looked after and that there was no process of application forms, no vetting, no standards, none of that, I think there's good reason to protest the actions of this government.

Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Tabuns has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1931 to 2001.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 5; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I return now to the member for Toronto—Danforth, who still has the floor.

Mr. Tabuns: As we would say in my old days at Toronto city council, I have room for growth. I appreciate

the fact that we've had an opportunity to vote on this—

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns: It seems that I've stirred up the Liberal benches. It's nice to see that people are awake and commenting.

This is a government clearly on edge. It's no surprise that they're bringing in closure. It's no surprise that when we speak about certain subjects, they get extraordinarily cranky. When I talk about the hydro corridor through the east end, almost invariably I get some retorts from a number of members of the House for whom the idea is highly problematic politically, and one they simply don't want to have talked about. When I talk about slushgate, Collegiate, we also get yowls—no question.

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns: Ah, you can hear them now. They're alive; they're kicking. It's so good to hear them speaking out on behalf of this province in the way they speak out.

This is a government that disposed of money at the end of the last fiscal year through its Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in a way that has provoked debate and questions for the last few weeks. It's very clear that when we asked in this Legislature for the paper trail, none was provided. When we asked about application forms, finally they were conjured up. When the Premier was asked in scrum about how this was handled, at first what he had to say was, “Well, you know, we made some mistakes. There were some problems here. We can do better.” But when the Premier is pushed, when his minister is pushed, what we get are accusations that somehow we on this side of the House don't like immigrants.

My parents emigrated to this country in the 1950s. My colleague Paul Ferreira is from good immigrant stock. A number of us on this side of the House are immigrants. So for this government to say that we're asking questions about their political irresponsibility, about their unaccountable approach in dealing with government funds—to throw out those kinds of insults shows the lack of substance, the lack of defensibility of the position they've taken.

Then the Premier descended to the whole area of talking about racism or a racist approach on the part of the opposition when we're asking these questions. In the last few days we have had people in from immigrant groups talking about the fact that they were ignored. This government that seeks to say it is the one, true voice for new Canadians happened to ignore a whole bunch of new Canadians when it dished out its cash.

This government is a government that has substantial problems, that is doing its best to set those problems aside, to cover them over, to time-allocate its way to the end of this session so it can get on with running the advertising campaign that it so desperately wants to run and not be in the House answering questions, not be caught up in scrums where they get asked embarrassing questions. Clearly, this is a government for whom closure is becoming much more a habit.

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns: They're alive, they're awake on the other benches. I can hear them now. I can hear them well. Speaker, doesn't it delight you to hear them?

In any event, they will go on—

The Acting Speaker: It may delight you, but I need to be able to hear you as well, and I would ask the government members to come to order.

Mr. Tabuns: Why, thank you, Speaker.

There's no question that democracy is a crucial tool—"tool" is too narrow—a crucial instrument for society to protect itself. In the last few decades, if we look around the world and look at countries that have had difficulties, it's those that have non-responsive governments that have the greatest difficulties. In the 1980s, Scientific American did a very good, extensive article on the correlation between democratic government and famine. Those countries, whether they were poor or not, that had democracies had a far lower incidence of famine—of death from famine, to be more precise—than those countries that were not democracies. When the people have the ability to throw out a government, then governments tend to be more responsive. When governments shut down debate and close off a society, close off debate, then that government is less accountable.

There's a social foundation to any society, and that's an agreement between rulers and ruled to look after one another, and to the extent that you have a functioning democracy, you have the opportunity for the rulers to be held accountable and to actually do what the ruled—the mass of people—want done in their lives.

We need an informed democracy in this society. We know, in the last few decades in the fight around climate change, that oil companies have been extraordinarily active throwing dust in people's eyes around the simple physical reality of what's happening in this world. They've obscured the truth to people. They tried to say back in the 1980s and 1990s that there was no such thing as climate change. Well, they lost that because the evidence became too clear. Then they said, "Well, it'll change but we'll all like the heat." We're starting to see problems that are profound and, thus, they can't say that anymore.

What they're saying now, and which I find a very interesting tactical retreat, is simply, "Well, you can't go too fast on this stuff. You've got to be real slow. Can't go too fast, now." At every stage we've seen this retrenchment that has been a very effective rearguard movement. When the era that we have just lived through is written up in history books, we will see, in fact, that the oil companies and the interests connected to them were extraordinarily effective at pulling a veil in front of democracy on this continent and others.

I asked myself at times: Why is it that in other places things have moved more quickly? If you look at Europe and the green consciousness there, you see in fact a continent where people went through difficulties in the Second World War that built into their culture the idea that things could come apart in a profound way, so in those cultures there's an understanding that, yes, human

beings can make a big mistake, society can go in the wrong direction and things can come unglued.

2010

That's part of the reason there was such a powerful movement in the 1980s against the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons to West Germany and, frankly, to East Germany. Just as there were people in the west who fought against those weapons, there were people in the east. People understood what was happening there. In the late 1990s and the early part of this decade in Europe, the thing that started shifting consciousness was flooding; flooding in areas that had not seen flooding in many centuries. People started to realize that there was an impact on their lives and that there was going to be more of an impact on their lives.

In the early part of this decade, I remember reading the Guardian from the UK. They have their daily edition in the UK and they have the overseas edition. In their newspapers when they talked about the flooding they saw in unprecedented locations, their insurance companies would refer to it as being climate change-related. Here in North America, we would report the same floods but with no commentary published crediting it to climate change. So we, here, still don't have as thorough a debate on these matters as we need to have.

I had an opportunity about two weeks ago to meet with a church group in my riding, Kairos, a group of activists in the faith community looking at different aspects of the water situation in Canada. They actually wanted to talk about the impact of climate change on rivers in western Canada, particularly the Athabasca River and its relationship to the oil sands. It's interesting to do the research in preparation for that talk, because when you look at western Canada and you look at the great rivers that flow through western Canada, you don't often think about the reality that those rivers are fed by glaciers and those glaciers, in turn, are being eliminated by global warming. Glacier National Park in the United States is projected to be gone, to be free of glaciers, by 2030. The process of change is extremely rapid, and cities like Calgary and Edmonton and places like the Athabasca River are all being impacted by this change in climate.

Here in Canada, we haven't had the full democratic debate. We started to have that democratic debate in the last half-year or so, maybe the last year—a very brief period of time.

Here in this Legislature we've had debate about a number of bills. The water bill was put through time allocation, closure, very recently. I don't have a problem with most of what's in that bill, although when I had an opportunity to speak to it, I noted there was, and is, a very substantial flaw in that bill, and that's that it doesn't control the transfer of water from one Great Lakes basin to another. It purports to stop the flow of water out of the Great Lakes basin but not from one Great Lake to another. That's a substantial problem. That bill has been time-allocated. There are many people who are extremely concerned about that substantial loophole in the bill that

has consequences for the effectiveness of the bill as a whole.

Now, this government has decided, for whatever reason, that it doesn't want to continue debating its bills. It doesn't think it has the support. I would say that in a lot of ways that's probably true. It's a government that's scrabbling around, hoping to get things through before this election, before the end of this House, trying to ram things through so it doesn't have to sit through June and leaving us in a situation where things are going to continue dribbling through.

We will see if, in fact, this government brings in mid-night sittings. We've offered to sit through June and we've offered to sit through July. The government has important business. It can sit down with us. We're happy to meet with them. We're happy to debate with them.

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns: Now, Speaker, it's very interesting to me that you intervened before, and I'm starting to find once again that I can hear the delightful sounds of the government as it bays in the distance. Can you hear me, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat.

I would ask the government members once again to come to order.

I'll return to the member for Toronto–Danforth, who has the floor.

Mr. Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

It was interesting to start off this debate actually reading Hansard, different members of this government who railed mightily against closure when it was imposed by the previous government. Frankly, I would probably have opposed closure by the previous government as well, but the biblical terms, the apocalyptic terms, talking about how the last government was evil in its closures suddenly have disappeared when this government is talking about its closure. This is a government that's very, very happy to impose closure, because they're doing it on a regular basis. They don't like hearing that, having it pointed out. It makes them cranky, but it's the simple reality.

This is a government that is going to have to face the voters in a not-much-longer time, a government that is trying to get through whatever it can get through in the last few weeks remaining to it. It's a government that, frankly, is trying to look as good as it can, with as much makeup as it can put on, but I don't think a lot of people are buying that, because when people hear things about slushgate, about Collegiate, when they look at the record, when they look at who has done what with what money, when they listen to the very weak and feeble defences of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, they're not pleased. You hear about it.

My colleague the member from Beaches–East York went through editorials that have been written in newspapers decrying the poor behaviour of this government, talking about its failure to act in a way that is defensible, failure to act in a way that's at all methodical, fair, open, transparent; a government that is just simply deciding

that, "It's the end of the year. We've got some extra money." What was the process that we had described in the paper? The members were told that. Money is available, so let's hear proposals. It's absolutely fascinating.

I have to say that here's a government that could bring in Ontario's Auditor General to look at the whole process. It's a government that could call on the Auditor General to come in and check out its books, say, "Yep, everything is dealt with fair and square. Everything is fine. Everything is on the up and up." But frankly this is a government that wouldn't do that. No, this is a government that would prefer to close that door and then close the door on debate; a government that would prefer to heckle from its benches, make as much noise as it can, try to obscure people when they ask questions in question period and get as far away from those issues as it possibly, possibly can. It wants them gone. It wants this whole issue gone. It just wants to put things through so that the flyer that they put out in the next election has stamped on it, "We did this." Whether there was substance to "this" or not doesn't matter; it's a stamp on their flyer.

It's a government that has run its course. Like an old windup clock, it's just winding down and winding down. There's very little left to it except for the spin, and we see that spin. We see it with Mr. Kinsella's efforts, we see it with the efforts of the Minister of Citizenship and we see it with the whole issue around Lottogate—a government that didn't know what it was doing on Lottogate. It was sort of swept away by all that was going on, responded to what was going on by simply trying to cover it all over.

Again, when you start talking about those issues, when you start stirring up their benches, they get very excited. They don't get that excited on questions of substance or policy, but when you actually start talking about what they've done to offend the sensibilities and the well-being of this province, they get mighty cranky—mighty, mighty cranky.

They may well assure you, "No, Speaker, we don't get cranky. We don't mind. You can say whatever you want." They can say that, but I hear them. They're speaking very loudly with this time allocation. "Let's get it through, let's just ram it through, and then get to the hustings," because that's where they want to be. They don't want to be in the House; no question, they don't want to be here. They want to be out. They don't want to answer questions. They don't want to have to deal with the Queen's Park press gallery, let me tell you that. They don't want to have questions put to them on a daily basis, week after week, because the questions don't show them in a good light. They can't show them in a good light because too much is going on that is contrary to the interests of people in this province; too much is going on that people object to, certainly that people who follow this House, who follow the news about this House, object to.

So once again I move adjournment of this House because I believe that this House has had it.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Tabuns has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2022 to 2052.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table staff.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 8; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Toronto–Danforth still has the floor, I believe.

Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak for a while tonight.

As you know, I had the opportunity to chair the safe schools action team, which included some people who were just wonderful to work with and who were real experts in the fields of both bullying and school safety. Bill 212 came out of the work done by the safe schools action team, so I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on it this evening.

I'd like to first of all thank the official opposition and their House leader, because they have indicated that they will be supporting the bill. They agree that we have substantially repositioned it and fixed it and that these are amendments that we do need to make to the Education Act. The opposition House leader has also indicated that as far as they're concerned, the opposition would be ready to have a vote, that they think the second reading debate has been quite adequate.

Part of that process that the safe schools action team did involved two very extensive consultations. The action team wrote two reports, both of which are involved in the current amendments. The first report was on bullying prevention, and when we looked at bullying, I think we were at nine different locations around the province. We did a very extensive consultation, going around the province and speaking to people about bullying, and then tabled our report on what we needed to do about it. One of the things we found at that stage was that one of the problems in many schools is that, in fact, people really weren't taking bullying seriously. There wasn't the understanding of the damage that bullying can do to a child if they are subject to incessant bullying. We were also made aware at that point that Internet bullying is frequently becoming more and more of a problem. When we looked at that, we said, "You know, there really needs to be a way that we make it clear to educators that bullying is a problem that must be taken seriously." We also said, "Yes, we need to do a lot of work in terms of training principals in making sure that they actually know how to handle incidents of bullying in their schools."

So we've actually already done a lot of work in the interim. We've spent a considerable amount of money training each, in co-operation with the three principals' associations in the province—the English Catholic, the English public and the French principals. We worked very closely with all three associations and provided training on how to handle bullying for every principal and vice-principal in the province. That was one set of consultations.

The second set of consultations was specifically around the Safe Schools Act, and in that case we visited six different locations in the province, had a tremendous response from the public in terms of people who wanted to talk about the Safe Schools Act. Those consultations had an attendance collectively of over 700 people. In addition, we spoke to a number of the stakeholder groups, both the conventional education stakeholder groups and also community groups and parents of special education children, people who had a specific interest in the whole area of this existing Safe Schools Act. So we did a very extensive consultation.

This is where I need to tell you that I'm feeling a little bit like Alice in Wonderland tonight because, obviously, being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I've been in the House for most of the debate on this bill. And what I have heard on previous evenings or afternoons, as the case may be, of debate from the third party is a concern that, in fact, we weren't moving quickly enough, that we had been wasting time consulting with all these people, when they had heard from two or three groups who told us exactly what we should do and why were we wasting our time talking to all these other people?

So you can understand how I find it very strange that tonight the third party seems to have quite a different position, which is that we should take more time to talk about the act, that we haven't had enough debate, and we should stay here and debate this act some more. I'm quite confused as to why the position yesterday, which was "too much consultation; get on with it," has changed tonight to "not enough consultation; we need to talk more." I don't know. I just don't understand it. But we will deal with that shortly.

So what did we really find when we went looking at the Safe Schools Act? When we went looking at the Safe Schools Act on that consultation, we heard people tell us about a number of concerns they had. But what it basically boiled down to is that there is a huge variability in the way this act has been implemented as you move around the province. In fact, if you look at the data on suspensions, they run from a low of 2% of the students in one board being suspended in each year up to a high of 35% of the students in one board being suspended during the course of the year. That's over a third of the kids in the board being suspended in one year.

2100

Clearly, when you've got a piece of legislation that has that much variability in its implementation, there's something wrong with the way the act is structured. In

fact, when you look at the way the act is structured, it's not surprising that there's all the confusion, because the act says that for one list of offences the student shall be suspended—in other words, it's mandatory—and for another list of offences, the student shall be expelled—mandatory. So you would think, on the face of it, that it's a zero tolerance act, and that's the way a number of boards throughout the province have in fact behaved. They've taken it as a zero tolerance act: "Do this and you're out."

Other boards have looked at another clause in the act which says, "But the principal, if they want to, may take into consideration some mitigating factors." Those are things like, is the student really a danger to other students in the school, or has the student got the capacity to understand the consequences of their action? But the problem is, the way the current act is structured, that's entirely up to the principal in the individual school. Some principals used that clause and other principals didn't use that clause; hence the confusion around how the act should be implemented.

But what we heard from people was that they didn't want the zero tolerance interpretation of the act. What they wanted us to do was clarify that what we mean is progressive discipline, and that's actually what Bill 212 does. It clarifies the act and makes it clear that what we really want is to have a regime of progressive discipline in which the schools and the boards have the flexibility to make sure that, yes, consequences are mandatory, but the consequence is designed to fit the particular circumstance rather than it automatically being suspension or automatically being expulsion.

The other thing we found when we went and talked to people was that the way the current act is structured, it says that if a student is fully expelled, permanently expelled from a school, the board is required to offer to send that student to something called a strict discipline program. That seems very good. Strict discipline programs, despite the name, which sounds perhaps a little bit scary, have actually turned out to be very good in some cases—alternative programming where the student is provided not just with an opportunity to continue their academic studies, but also with a lot of counselling and intervention in terms of their social skills and the other issues they have in their life that are preventing them from getting on with schooling and causing the bad behaviour that got them expelled in the first place.

So what people said to us was, "These strict discipline or alternative programs are really very valuable, but the problem is, there are only 12 of them in the entire province." So if you get expelled under the current act and you're fortunate enough to live somewhere near a strict discipline program, then the expelled student has the opportunity to go to one of these alternative programs and, in essence, earn their way back into the system. If, on the other hand, the luck of the draw has it that you're a student who lives far away from one of these strict discipline programs—and, given the huge geography we cover in Ontario, many kids are three, four, five hours

away from the nearest program, or even farther in northern Ontario—what happens in those cases is that if the student is expelled, they're out permanently, they have no access to alternative programs, and essentially what you've got is a dropout.

People said to us, "That's really not right." It doesn't make sense that the school system is really encouraging dropouts. We know from all the data that if students drop out of school, they don't complete their education, that they will never have access to good-paying jobs, and in many cases, particularly with younger people, they'll become a burden on society because education is becoming so critical to getting any sort of permanent, good-paying job. People said, "We really need to think more carefully about what we're doing here. This idea of, 'Do this and you're automatically out,' isn't working. We need to make sure that if a student is expelled, they have access to an alternative program."

Let's have a look at what we're actually doing with this act. First of all, Bill 212 will bring progressive discipline into practice. While there isn't a lot about how to do progressive discipline in the bill, there will be a policy program memorandum following on. Once the proposed legislation has been passed—presuming it will be passed—then we would go ahead and put policies and guidelines in place that the boards will have to follow. That will give them more guidance around how to implement the progressive discipline regime. That's what we heard in our consultations: People wanted a lot of clarification around how to implement progressive discipline.

When you look at the act itself, it has been changed too. What it says now is that for the list of suspendable offences—it's actually almost the same list as in the current act—it is mandatory that the principal consider whether there should be a suspension, but only that they are required to consider. As part of that consideration, they are required to think about mitigating factors and whether, given the circumstances, suspension or some other form of discipline is appropriate. Similarly, with expulsion it is still mandatory that the principal think about whether or not they should recommend to the board that the student be expelled for a very serious list of infractions like bringing or using a weapon, trafficking drugs in schools, assault causing bodily harm—those sorts of things. In those very serious things, we still expect that principals would be considering whether this student should be expelled.

But again, it's also mandatory that they look at the circumstances around the incident. For example, if they found that there was a special education student who didn't have the developmental capacity to understand the consequences of an aggressive action, the principal might well decide that some other form of correction—actually, just working with the student to understand how to better control their behaviour—would be more appropriate than suspension or expulsion.

We are actually also adding to the list of things that are considered to be mitigating factors. We will now be saying that the principal needs to look at age, because we

find that we have students as young as five years old who have been permanently expelled from the school system as a result of the current act. Clearly, it makes no sense to permanently kick out five-year-olds. So we are saying that it's mandatory that the principal look at age and really consider whether it is age-appropriate to be suspending or expelling kids.

We're also adding to the mitigating factors—because again, we heard this from a number of communities, but also from the Ontario Human Rights Commission—considering whether there has been some form of racial- or gender-based discrimination or harassment that is really at the root of the problem that got the student in trouble in the first place, and having a little bit more sophisticated look at what's really going on in the life of the student.

2110

One of the things I mentioned was that the list of suspendable offences is almost the same. There's one difference. We're adding bullying to the list of things for which a principal must consider whether a student should be suspended. They won't necessarily be suspended, but what that does say is that when bullying is occurring, a consequence is mandatory. Schools can no longer say, "We're just going to pass off bullying." It's on the list of things that they are required to do by this new law: to deal with instances of bullying.

We will be further defining "bullying" when we look at the regulations and the policy guidelines for the boards, but what I can tell you is that when we talk about bullying, we're talking about not just physical bullying, which is how people used to think about bullying—you know, the schoolyard bully who was knocking the other kids around—but we understand today, when we look at the bullying research, that bullying also includes verbal bullying. It can include social bullying, which is the bullying of ostracism, when one group of kids will gang up on a poor little fellow or little girl. Actually, it's often girls, because girls are really good at social bullying. And you get—

Interjections.

Mrs. Sandals: I can say that. I'm a woman; it's okay. Women go, "Uh-huh." Girls are very good at social bullying, unfortunately.

Mr. Wilkinson: We'll let it go this time.

Mrs. Sandals: We'll let it go this time? No, actually, I think that the research would probably show that that is a fact: that boys are more likely to use physical bullying and girls are more likely to use verbal or social bullying. For a student who is ostracized at school day in and day out, it can be an absolutely devastating experience.

Then, of course, we have the new phenomenon of Internet bullying and the fact that the verbal and social issues can take place in person or over the Internet. To make sure that it's absolutely clear that Internet bullying is an issue that we want to deal with, we're expanding the circumstances in which the act will now apply.

The existing act talks about the act applying in the school or at school events. We're adding that the legislation also applies in the event that an act has a negative

influence on school climate, and that of course includes Internet bullying, which, although it happens off-site usually, has a very negative impact on the climate and what's going on within the school. So that will allow principals to be quite clear that they do have the authority within the act to deal with Internet bullying. That, to date, has been rather a grey area. So there are a number of things here that will be helpful.

I talked about alternative programs, and what we are also requiring in the act is that when a student is expelled or long-term suspended, the board will be required to provide an alternative program. And we're not just saying that. We have already committed in our budget to \$31 million on an annual basis to be directed at the implementation of the new act around discipline and behaviour and safe schools. Of that \$31 million, \$23 million is specifically directed towards helping the boards set up the alternative programs.

We understand that that will be a challenge in some of the more rural areas, so we have made it quite clear within the act that boards may work together to set up alternative programs, particularly in some of the more rural areas of the province, where we would anticipate that the school boards will want to work together to set up those alternative programs. It will make sense for them to work co-operatively in terms of making sure that all their jurisdiction is covered with alternative programs.

One other issue I wanted to bring up: When we talked to special education parents—and you'll recall that special education students was one area that the Human Rights Commission identified—we found from them that the practice of exclusion, which is neither suspension nor expulsion, is actually the thing that has the more negative effect on special education. Regulation 474 in the current act allows a principal to exclude someone from a school with no right of appeal, and what we found was that with special education students, principals were often just excluding the students from the school. Because it's neither suspension nor expulsion, there's actually no legal requirement for the principal to record that, and because there was no requirement for anybody to record this, we quite frankly couldn't collect any data. But we certainly heard over and over again from special education parents all around the province that exclusion is a big problem. So, in fact, one of the amendments that we will be making in the regulations is to amend regulation 474 so it makes it very clear that students cannot be excluded from their own school. That clause was really put in place to deal with parents or intruders and to make sure that people who shouldn't be on the premises at all could be excluded. So we'll get that regulation back to its original intent.

I think what we are hearing from people is that this act has had a great deal of support in the community. It certainly follows the recommendations that the safe schools action team made in terms of the changes that the team said should be made in the act, and there was substantial agreement around that, so I'm very pleased that the Minister of Education has acted on the team's recom-

mendation. I'm very pleased that, in fact, the opposition—at least the official opposition; it's totally unclear to me where the third party is—at least is recognizing that even though this was originally their act, these are sensible amendments as we go forward.

One of the other things that we will be doing is clarifying who it is who actually suspends and expels. So we will be clarifying that only principals suspend and that if you are going to permanently expel a student, or even temporarily—for six months—expel a student, then it would be necessary for the board to have a quasi-judicial hearing—again, a recommendation that we heard from people all over the province.

So I'm very much looking forward to this act going to committee, and hearing the up-to-date input and bringing it back for further debate at third reading.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take a moment to recognize an individual in the members' gallery, a former student of mine from Long Sault, Ontario—I taught him in grades 7 and 8—and now a student at the University of Guelph. I'm proud to have Brad Crepeau here.

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order, but we welcome you to the chamber.

It now being 9:20, we will now vote on the time allocation motion.

Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 352. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2120 to 2130.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Kular, Kuldip	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	McNeely, Phil	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sergio, Mario
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Smith, Monique
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie	
Jeffrey, Linda	Patten, Richard	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 31; the nays are 6.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 2131.

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Mercredi 2 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 mai 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: May 2 is going to be a special day for my wife, Joan, and me in that we are welcoming our seventh grandchild, a new granddaughter, Jordan Eleanor Stearns, to Ontario and to the Kingston part of Ontario. Her brother Jackson and sister Samantha are ecstatic. Her parents, Jarrod and Rhonda, are wonderful parents, and I know that we will have another great Progressive Conservative in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): We are now in the final days of the 38th provincial Parliament, and the McGuinty Liberal government is in its death throes.

Unable to defend his government's actions or answer questions on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming scandal, and now the Minister of Citizenship's political slush fund, last Friday the Premier resorted to the lowest form of attack, no doubt devised in the Liberal campaign war room, and then refused to apologize.

As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, last March it came to light that millions of dollars had been paid out by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. in dishonest lottery ticket claims, meaning thousands of Ontarians were robbed of money that was rightfully theirs, all this while the minister responsible for lotteries ignored the issue until he was caught by the Ombudsman and the opposition.

Our caucus is continuing to investigate that scandal at the standing committee on estimates. Our members on that committee are serving the public interest in an effort to get to the bottom of what really happened. While the Premier has refused to attend the committee to answer our legitimate questions, his representative has been stonewalling at every turn.

Soon it will be the turn of the minister responsible for lotteries to account for his actions at the estimates com-

mittee. No doubt the Liberal war room is writing his script as we speak and counselling him to repeat the canned lines he has recited in this House. Let's hope he doesn't follow the Premier into the gutter with his responses.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Yet again the government refuses to do what the opposition, and I think the media and many Ontarians, are asking them to do, and that is to make sure that the auditor is able to get to the bottom of what is the slushgate affair.

We know the facts. The facts, as they are presented now, are that there is money that has gone out the door in two successive end-of-year runs when it comes to the provincial budget. Money has gone out the door at year-end, and they've given that money, without application, to particular groups whose only claim to fame in some cases—and I don't say all—is that they have very deep and direct ties to the Liberal Party.

We in the opposition and others in the media are saying this is wrong. We in this Legislature are the stewards of public dollars, and it is our responsibility to make sure that every dollar that is collected by way of taxes in this province is then expended in a way that makes some sense when it comes to financial accountability and that it does positive good at the end. I'm sure that some of this money is going to good. That is not the issue. The issue is that of accountability.

I say to the government across the way, yes, we as the opposition will do what we have to do to shed light on this situation, and if we have to use the rules of the House to do that, we will do so until this government wakes up and does what it is charged to do, and that is to be responsible to the citizens of Ontario and those who pay the taxes and the bills in the province of Ontario.

So we're saying to you, call the auditor in. Have the auditor do what is necessary in order to shed light on this situation so that Ontarians and everybody can be clear as to what has happened and to make sure it doesn't happen again.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I rise today to talk about the renaissance happening in the health care sector thanks to the McGuinty government.

Nowhere is this more evident than in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings.

When the Tories were in office, they were in a rush to cut health care funding in their reckless quest to find efficiencies in government spending. Province-wide cuts were made to hospitals, totalling \$557 million in their first two years in office. This was felt in my community of Prince Edward–Hastings and in rural ridings like Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The Tory government cut a total of \$5.8 million from hospitals in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, an average 8.9% cut in funding. The cuts were felt at every hospital in the area and by local families who depended on them. They then closed the Pembroke Civic Hospital and its emergency department, just one of 28 public hospitals and more than 20 emergency rooms closed during their time in office. In fact, in their rush to close the hospital, it had the dubious distinction of being the first public hospital closed by their government.

Our government is embarking on an ambitious plan to overturn these years of neglect. We have invested an additional \$2.4 billion in hospitals since 2003. We have a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan. There are more than 65 major hospital projects set to proceed across the province. This includes emergency room expansion or improvement projects in Arnprior, Deep River, Pembroke and Barry's Bay.

The Tories left the people of my community and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke having to drive to another community for care. We're bringing care back to their—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Members' statements.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): The scandal-plagued McGuinty Liberals were in full panic mode yesterday as the Liberals stooped to new lows in House decorum and character assassination of this member. The McGuinty Liberals' fear of a John Tory-led government which is accountable for taxpayers' dollars and provides leadership in solving our health care system problems and fixing our economy, which has lost over 100,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector—and the member from Windsor, who talks about other ridings, should focus on his own riding. There are thousands of Windsorites out of a job, and they're going to be looking to him for answers and looking for his seat.

I'm proud to be led by John Tory, and I'm proud of my record as MPP for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, which has seen unprecedented investment in long-term care, new schools, a new RVH hospital with two MRI machines, cancer care and kidney dialysis for closer-to-home service, the return of GO Transit and a university-styled Georgian College. The new portable radiation machine announced yesterday was through the efforts of MP Patrick Brown and Minister of Health Tony Clement. They got that ball rolling. It wasn't this government. They were out there working with RVH.

I've stood up for my constituents in this House, and allegations by a do-nothing, scandal-plagued Minister Caplan are a new low in decorum in this House. I'll stand for election on October 10 with John Tory, and we're going to win the next provincial election.

WORLD ASTHMA DAY

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise today to commemorate World Asthma Day. World Asthma Day is an effort by the Canadian Lung Association to heighten awareness about this potentially dangerous disorder.

Recent studies indicate that a large proportion of the general public is at risk of developing asthma, and according to the burden-of-asthma report released in September 2006, an individual in Ontario has a 40% risk of developing asthma before they reach the age of 40. The risk of developing asthma is greatest in childhood, with 20% of children being diagnosed with asthma by the age of 12.

1340

The good news is that asthma can be controlled. With the proper medication and proper precautions, many who have this disorder can live a normal life. I am one of those examples. Today in the members' gallery, we are joined by members of the Ontario Lung Association, including Cindy Scherban. I'd like to welcome them today. Welcome to Queen's Park. The lung association is one of Canada's oldest voluntary, not-for-profit organizations. The Ontario Lung Association was incorporated in 1945 and has community offices across the province. This organization is a champion in informing the public in prevention and control of asthma, chronic lung disease caused by smoking and with air quality and its effects on lung health.

For their tireless work, I sincerely congratulate them and welcome them. The Ontario Lung Association has a saying that I believe rings true: "When you can't breathe, nothing else matters." I'm here as an asthmatic to tell you that asthma can be controlled.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I arrived this morning at the Caledonia convoy kickoff and was met by a lady from Six Nations and another from Grassy Narrows. They presented me with a pin as a show of good faith. This positive approach has continued throughout today. In front of Queen's Park this morning I read a number of signs. One said, "Forgotten, frustrated, and flicked off." Another read, "McGuinty, you bought it, solve it." Caledonia residents came to Queen's Park on Dalton McGuinty's invitation. They're hoping to stimulate a more informed policy debate. They ask for one law for everyone. The policies over the past 15 months have been vague, ineffectual, passive, based on dubious assessments and constantly changing commitments. We need a new formula. The current formula is not working.

Fifteen months of disruption for an entire community that has been forced to bear the brunt of a national issue—yet the Premier, who invited residents to Queen's Park, hasn't been to Caledonia and wouldn't meet with them today. Caledonia residents are using the phrase "R2R." It means many things: road to revival and, hopefully, road to resolution. We must reverse the policy of weakness and deceit. There is no other option.

I welcome the people from Caledonia.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR AGRI-FOOD INNOVATION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): This past Friday I had the opportunity to represent the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for the inaugural Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence ceremony in Elmwood. This program received a five-year, \$2.5-million commitment as part of the 2006 provincial budget. It recognizes farmers for being innovative in the running of their businesses and has been designed to foster even greater innovation across the province's agri-food sector. Fifty-five regional awards have been presented under this program to recognize the significant contribution that Ontario farmers make to rural communities and our economy through innovation, new market opportunities and value-added products.

Regional awards were valued at \$5,000 each and were distributed to six recipients. To highlight a few of the recipients of this award, Chesley District High School was awarded for its innovative specialist high skills major program, which promotes agriculture business education. West Grey Premium Beef was recognized for their innovative vision in building a successful, value-added agri-food chain, and the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative was awarded for their leadership and innovation in growing a stronger market for dairy goat products.

All of these award recipients are entrepreneurial success stories, each of which started with a single idea and incredible fortitude to see their project through to successful completion. I wish to add my congratulations to all of the successful recipients.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to remind the Speaker that that was my riding and I was there also.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the hot issue of climate change. As the world becomes more aware of the causes of climate change, our government is working hard to combat them.

Near my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, we already have the largest wind farm in Canada up and running. Last week, we announced more good news on this subject—with Ontario to be the home of North America's largest solar farm. That's 40 megawatts of emission-free power

by 2010, enough to power 6,000 homes. The week before that, we announced that our government was banning inefficient light bulbs by 2012.

These recent announcements build on the good work already done by the McGuinty government. It's too bad the members opposite, like the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, want to turn the clock back, but he should know that Ontarians aren't interested. While the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and his party think we should keep coal plants open, we remain steadfast in our commitment to phasing them out. This single act would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30 megatonnes alone, the largest single greenhouse gas reduction initiative in Canada. And while he thinks that conservation can't happen because "[we're] depending on total compliance with a third party which is the people of Ontario," on this side of the House we believe that the people of Ontario, when given the tools, will be conservation champions.

The McGuinty government looks forward to working with Ontarians to help them to be part of the solution in combating climate change, rather than doing nothing, like the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke suggests we should.

CANDIDATE'S COMMENTS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to address an issue of serious concern in my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. Frankly, this concern is a serious concern in all rural ridings. That issue is the metering of private wells.

Again, Cathy Galt, the PC candidate in my riding, has not yet learned the danger of sending out false information. I'm getting more than a little tired of Cathy Galt continuing to spread misinformation to our neighbours and friends in Northumberland-Quinte West. She did this to the Northumberland Hills Hospital about wait times without researching the facts, which caused the Leader of the Opposition to have to apologize for this misinformation.

I have here in my hand a petition sent by Cathy Galt which clearly blames Dr. Robert Kyle, the medical officer of health from Durham region, as being the source of fear-mongering about the metering of private wells. I also have here the official response categorically denying he ever made those statements. The good doctor has gone so far as to send this information to Mimi Singh, senior solicitor for Durham region, should further legal action be required.

Our government has no plans to meter wells, period. To lay the blame for this malicious rumour at the feet of a respected and honourable public servant such as Dr. Robert Kyle is reprehensible. When will the Leader of the Opposition call for the candidate to apologize to Dr. Kyle?

Let's hope tomorrow does not bring more false accusations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I notice that where the member from Northumberland received this information was from Warren Kinsella's latest—

The Speaker: That was not a point of order.

VISITORS

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It is my pleasure today to introduce our page, who was the page captain today leading into the Legislative Assembly, Matei Leshchyshen; his parents, Dmytro and Luba Leshchyshen, who are here; his grandfather, Petro Holiad; his grandmother, Ruth Leshchyshen; his great-aunt, Olive Antonyshen; and his younger cousin, Olena Leshchyshen. They were here to acknowledge and honour Matei as he became a page in the Legislature.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South—Weston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last week, members of the Portuguese Canadian community celebrated the 33rd anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, which took place on April 25, 1974.

I am pleased that today in this House we are joined by one of the brave military officers who stood up against the dictatorship of Portugal at the time. I'd like to welcome Colonel Jose Marques Goncalves Novo, and his wife, Teresa Goncalves Novo, who is the vice-president of the Portuguese National Nurses Council in Lisbon. They are joined by two members of the executive council of the 25th of April cultural association here in Toronto, Carlos Morgadinho and Emmanuel Martins. Welcome to all of them.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have the very distinct privilege today of introducing to the House two wonderful guests, one from the great city of Hamilton here in Canada, Dottoressa Giovanna Maio, who is accompanying, direct from Italy, the most distinguished stylist, the most modern artist in style, from the beautiful province of Umbria, the city of Macerata, Dottore Vittorio De Marchi, the most distinguished stylist and artist in Europe. They are here with us today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham—Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi

concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: Shall the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs with regard to Bill 187 be received and adopted?

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bartolucci, Rick	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Bentley, Christopher	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Broten, Laurel C.	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Brownell, Jim	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Cansfield, Donna H.	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Caplan, David	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Chan, Michael	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	Phillips, Gerry	
Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 11, 2007, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 2, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Gerretsen has moved government notice of motion number 337. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1401 to 1406.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brotten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	McGuinty, Dalton	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ferreira, Paul	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 26.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION WEEK

SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm proud to report this week that we are celebrating Education Week in Ontario.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize our partners in education:

—the parents, for helping out with homework, making the lunches and taking an active interest in what's going on at school;

—the students, for doing their best in their studies, getting involved in school activities and always, always dreaming about what's next;

—the school support staff, for playing their essential and invaluable role in enhancing the quality of the learning environment in our schools;

—the principals and administrators for their leadership and for giving students a guiding hand and a sympathetic ear.

Et, bien sûr, je veux également remercier nos enseignantes et enseignants. Le enseignantes et enseignants de l'Ontario comptent parmi les personnes les plus dynamiques, des plus passionnées et les plus optimistes que je connaisse.

Of course, I also want to thank our teachers. Ontario's teachers are among the most energetic, passionate and optimistic people I can think of. I have often said that Ontario is a province of great teachers. I know that, because when we offered them enhanced training, on an optional basis, on their own time, they packed the place. I know that, because when we asked them to embrace change and work with us on behalf of our kids, they met us with open minds and tremendous professionalism. I know that, because we set the bar high for student achievement, and student performance is improving year after year after year.

Earlier today, I recognized the very first winners of the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. These awards are yet another symbol of our commitment to supporting and celebrating excellence in our public schools.

Our award winners are with us in the gallery today. They are the following individuals: Celina Cada-Matasawagon, Carla D'Elia, Jerry Powidajko, Ruby Charron, Gretel Reid-Willis, Maria Nunes, Jerrold Karch, Peggy Morris, Dale Zimmerman, Kathy Elmer, Dina Dalia, Amare Demesie, Kelly Stapleton-Korber, Denis Sauvé and Dyson McLaren. Please join me in welcoming, congratulating and thanking our award winners.

I feel privileged, as I'm sure we all do, to work with all our education partners, and I want to thank all of them for all they do for us, day in and day out.

Working together, we've come a long way in three and a half years. Before we started, public education was a combat zone. Teachers were demoralized, and the education of our students was suffering.

Nous avons retroussé nos manches et nous nous sommes attaqués à la tâche. En seulement trois ans et demi, nous avons transformé l'éducation et nous avons obtenu des résultats dont nous pouvons être fiers en travaillant tout simplement ensemble.

In short order, we rolled up our sleeves and got down to work, and in just three and a half years, working together, we've turned education around and we're getting results we can be proud of.

Together, we worked to achieve labour peace. The result? There has not been a single teachers' strike since 2003.

Together, we wanted to come up with a way to keep our 16- and 17-year-olds engaged, no matter their learning style. The result? Our new learning to 18 law, giving young people the opportunity to reach their potential either through co-op programs, apprenticeships or work placements.

I should tell you that recently I had the opportunity to meet with the Minister of Education from the United Kingdom; I don't mind saying that in years past, I've been there and looked for ideas with respect to improving the quality of education. I've brought some of those ideas here. It's just great to know that the Minister of Education for the UK was here to get a better understanding of our learning to 18 program to see how he might replicate that in the UK, and I'm very proud of that.

One dimension of our learning to 18 program has to do with student success teachers. We now have teachers in all our high schools without immediate classroom responsibilities but who have direct responsibility to target young people who are at risk of dropping out, students who are struggling.

One story about one student success teacher: This particular student success teacher established a remedial hour over the lunch period. A young grade 9 student was involved in that program and volunteered to come during the lunch hour. This student success teacher, at the end of the semester, placed before all the students in the remedial hour a survey. The student asked, "So what's this all about?" The teacher said, "Well, we want to get a better understanding of how to improve this program because we didn't have it before." And he said, "You mean you didn't have a remedial hour before?" The teacher said, "That's correct." Then the student said, "You mean you just let us fail?"

Speaker, we will not let young people in the province of Ontario inside our publicly funded schools fail. We'll give them all the supports they need to succeed.

Together, we wanted to get class sizes down and test scores up. The result: We have reduced primary class sizes, and now 93% of them have 23 students or fewer, and test scores are rising year after year. Together, we knew we needed more teachers to give our children more attention. The result: There are thousands of new teachers, each bringing a fresh enthusiasm, and we've added a million new textbooks. Together, we wanted to fix our school buildings to make them safer, cleaner and better for learning. The result: Thousands of schools are being repaired and new schools are being built. Together, we worked to make our schools safer, because we owe it to our families to make sure their kids will be safe at school. I'm pleased to report, as well, that schools themselves are working together to share their best practices and support each other. The bottom line is that, together, we're getting results, and there is still more to do.

Continuing to move forward together means believing that public education is the very best education. It means

supporting our public school educators and strengthening our public school system. It means ensuring that public dollars fund public education and only public education, the system that educates 95% of Ontario children. I'm proud to report that we've invested more in public education in three and a half years than the previous government did in eight.

Notre succès en éducation publique n'est possible que grâce au dévouement de nos partenaires en éducation et au soutien durable des Ontariens et Ontariennes pour leur réseau d'éducation.

Our success in public education is only possible because of the dedication of our education partners and the continuing support of Ontarians for their school system.

I know we all agree: Our children are our most precious resource. Giving them the best public education builds the foundation for a strong economy supported by the best workers, and a caring society supported by the best citizens. This week, we celebrate in Ontario how far we've come in public education, always keeping an eye on all that there is left to do. If we keep working, building and dreaming together, there is nothing we can't accomplish for our children in our province.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED SERVICES AUX PERSONNES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I rise today to share the good news from our 2007 budget for supporting developmental services. I want to acknowledge the support of the Premier and my colleagues. With so many important and worthy but often competing needs across the province, the McGuinty government has once again been on the side of vulnerable Ontarians with a wide spectrum of needs.

With the commitment of more than \$200 million in additional funding over four years, our transformation of developmental services takes another giant step forward. For the first time, developmental services agencies can count on planned, multi-year increases for wages and services. This year, agencies will get more than \$22 million for base funding, which will compound annually over four years.

1420

In addition, agencies will get \$20 million for targeted wage gap funding to address the lowest-paid employees in this sector.

Base and wage gap funding will grow to \$181 million by 2010.

Le budget prouve l'engagement constant de notre gouvernement à créer un système de services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle fort, durable et tourné vers l'avenir.

Nous investissons dans les services et nous améliorons les programmes. De plus, nous augmentons les

mécanismes de soutien aux familles qui s'occupent chez elles de leurs membres ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

Une injection de 20 \$ millions renforcera la capacité de l'initiative d'aide passeport pour l'intégration communautaire et du programme de services particuliers à domicile, ainsi que des soutiens en établissement et des services cliniques spécialisés.

We are investing \$7 million in the passport mentoring initiative. By 2008, more than 2,000 individuals will have received passport funding, and we are expanding mentoring to Toronto, Peel and Six Nations.

We are investing \$3 million in special services at home. This will help to support an estimated 400 more individuals and families and work to maintain zero wait-lists across the province.

We are investing \$6 million in residential supports. This will create more than 70 new community spaces for individuals on residential supports wait-lists.

The ministry will continue to promote accountability in all these programs as part of our vision for a transformed developmental services sector.

With this budget, our government's total investment in developmental services climbs to more than half a billion dollars since 2003.

But, as we all know, transforming the developmental services sector is not just about money. To transform the developmental services sector we need innovation, we need partnerships, we need volunteers, we need forward-looking communities and agencies—agencies like Surrey Place, which I visited last night to celebrate their first annual June Callwood Awards ceremony. Awards were handed out to a number of forward-thinking individuals who created the Get In-line event. This has become an annual in-line skating event held in Toronto to raise awareness about developmental disabilities and funds for Surrey Place. I invite every one of you who is good in in-line skating to join the group.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partner agencies, their staff and their volunteers for all their work. People with a developmental disability rely on their services, their families rely on their support, and our government relies on them because governments cannot do it alone.

Dans les années à venir, des centaines de plus de personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle retourneront dans nos collectivités parce que nous remplissons un engagement de 30 ans concernant la fermeture des établissements.

Nous nous devons d'appuyer l'intégration communautaire. Des pensionnaires d'établissement attendaient avec impatience des occasions de voir la vie communautaire s'ouvrir à eux. Et leurs familles—dont bon nombre avaient d'abord émis des réserves au sujet du changement—sont les premières à nous dire que le gouvernement McGuinty fait ce qu'il fallait faire.

Ce budget renforcera les services et les programmes partout dans la province. Les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle seront en mesure de trouver du

soutien à proximité de leur domicile, dans leurs collectivités, et non pas dans un établissement éloigné.

C'est la raison pour laquelle nous transformons notre système de services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

We have made great strides and we still have a long way to go. This budget expresses our ongoing commitment to working with our partners to build stronger, more inclusive communities, not only for people with developmental disabilities, but for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of John Tory, the leader of the official opposition, and the Ontario PC caucus, I want to pay tribute to the leaders of the Ontario education system, and that includes teachers, principals and education support staff, whose combined efforts help our students achieve all that they can in school and throughout their entire lives.

Because this statement was to be all about honouring the award recipients, I chose to leave aside the partisan barbs I was tempted to include. I do, however, want to say this: I believe the Premier, the Minister of Education and the Minister of the Environment do owe the students, the education stakeholders in this province, an apology for their Flick Off campaign that they have wreaked upon the people of this province.

We can never show enough gratitude to our teachers as we celebrate their single-minded dedication of professionalism and commitment to teaching excellence that shapes the minds of our children and the social, cultural and political contours of our society, now and in the future.

A long-time teacher and Catholic priest of St. Michael's College in Toronto, Father Thomas Mulcahy, who, just before he died, received an honorary doctorate in education for, among other achievements, the establishment of schools in four different Ontario communities, had this to say when asked what the greatest honour he, as a teacher, had ever received:

"I received a note from a student that I keep in my coat pocket that said, 'Thank you for being my favourite teacher and for helping me learn to read well. It is a skill that came in handy in law school and I have dedicated my doctoral dissertation to you.'"

Another great teacher was none other than the father of the Premier, Dalton McGuinty. His work in social studies demonstrated a great depth of insight into the human condition, as those who knew him will attest. He brought that knowledge to his role as a member in this House, providing a great example to his children, one of whom strove to follow him here. The sign of a truly remarkable teacher will always be when their students do just that.

We are forever indebted to our teachers, and in celebrating the achievements of those who have been especially set apart for their exceptional commitment to

education, we celebrate them all and reaffirm our appreciation for their efforts and their example.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I am very pleased, on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, to respond to the announcement by the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to make it very clear that we all support government increasing assistance to Ontarians with developmental disabilities.

However, there is no new money in what the minister is announcing today. She is just repeating what the finance minister announced in the budget. I know that all members of this House are committed to helping our developmentally disabled citizens lead full and meaningful lives.

We support help for those who want to be able to enter the workforce. We also believe that workers in the field need a decent wage. I am also very proud of what our PC government did to help the developmentally disabled. A multi-year plan for developmental services was announced in the May 2001 budget. This plan had great results. More than 380 new spaces to live were created. Over 2,300 more people received special services-at-home funding. Over 700 more people received out-of-home respite. More than 370 additional people participated in day programs.

Since the introduction of the foundations program in May 2000, 1,500 young adults participated in 60 projects. So I hope that the money the government is promising in the budget will benefit the developmentally disabled in the way that our PC government's commitments did.

The government might also think of taking some of the money in the slush fund accounts and giving it to groups such as those who help the disabled, groups that know how to get value for money, groups that want to help those in need without getting money due to their Liberal Party ties.

I want to end by thanking all of the volunteers and the professional staff who work tirelessly on behalf of the developmentally disabled community in all of our ridings.

1430

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I say to everyone that New Democrats celebrate Education Week. We acknowledge those teachers whom the Premier has awarded the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence and we acknowledge the work of all teachers in our educational system for all the work they do.

We know that many teachers in the education system do more than just teach: they are police men and women; they are psychologists on a regular basis; they have to play social workers on a regular basis; they have to play mothers and fathers on a regular basis. The job is im-

portant and it's big, and it's getting much more responsible in terms of the work they have to do.

We acknowledge many of the educational assistants in our school systems, including the one that is leaving my Palmerston school—the meeting I went to last night—because we're losing educational assistants everywhere.

We acknowledge the work of maintenance workers, technicians and custodians who clean our schools.

I want to acknowledge that the Liberal regime is a much nicer regime than the previous one, but I say, we have to raise the bar a little bit higher than that—just a little bit; I'm not asking for much.

On Bill 52, which the government claims is a great bill that will allow students to go out and be taught by any Tom, Dick, Harry or Mary and be taught by non-teachers, the ones we celebrate, I say to the Premier that this is wrong. He wants to save money by having these programs taught by non-teachers, and I say it's wrong. More and more teachers, once they find this out, will oppose Bill 52.

I say to the Premier, we have fewer ESL teachers under a Liberal regime than ever before. We now have more students integrated in the regular classroom who have special education needs. We now have more students from grades 4 to 8 than ever before. Our classes are higher, and we have the regular teacher having to do all of that, having to teach ESL, special ed, split classes, now more than ever before, in the Liberal regime.

I want to say that in the Liberal regime we have fewer librarians than ever before. Only 35% of schools have a physical education teacher. This is a problem under the Liberal regime.

We have seven boards that we looked at, Premier. Seven boards have raised—because since 2005, we know how many dollars have been raised by the schools. Seven boards have raised \$125 million alone, and the minister says it's okay for boards to raise money to fix a school, to build a gym or whatever.

We've got a lot of problemos in the Liberal regime that we need to fix, and we hope to do that on October 10.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): In response to the Minister of Community and Social Services, New Democrats support increased funding for developmentally disabled adults and their support workers, but I have to ask you: What took you so long? The question is, why did it take you four years to get to this position?

We do, however, have a real question about this: whether the money you have brought forward at this very late date is enough to do the job you intended to do. Sixty-two million dollars for 40,000 people leaves each person with about \$150 each. It is hard to believe that this money you are putting forward with such fanfare will be able to fund important programs and improve the

wages of the support workers. This is a lot of ado about really not very much at all.

What we're really surprised about, however, is that the minister continues to ignore the problems associated with the long-term-care-home access protocol for adults with developmental disabilities. Mr. Keith Powell, the executive director of Community Living Ontario, wrote to your deputy minister expressing his deep concern that your government is moving people into long-term-care homes in order to ease the burden on the developmental services sector. We looked in your announcement, and there is absolutely nothing at all about it there. We saw the terrible circumstances of Mr. Croteau, a developmentally challenged man who was in a nursing home and was brutally killed. It was a terrible and preventable death which your ministry should have done something about, and the announcement today should have included that.

VISITORS

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise today to give recognition to the accounting profession. One of the great pillars of the accounting profession was Clarkson Gordon and Co., who morphed into many other accounting professions, and there are three great pillars of that community here today with us: David Crack, John Martin and Bill Beavers. I just wish them to be recognized for the great contribution they've made to the quality of business in Ontario.

ORDER AND DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Members will have noted that I have been attempting to guide them in the parliamentary manner of asking and responding to questions.

To this end, as discussed in House of Commons Procedure and Practice, "Any member participating in debate must address the Chair, not the House, a particular minister or member, the galleries, or the television audience." By doing this, members are less apt to engage in direct heated exchanges and personal attacks when their comments are directed through the Chair rather than to another member. If a member directs remarks towards another member, not the Speaker, he or she will be called to order and may be asked to rephrase their remarks.

I point out that this manner of conducting proceedings is commonplace in Parliaments based on the Westminster model, including all of those in Canada. It's not a novel concept. Indeed, Ontario's unfortunate current practice is well at odds not only with our not-so-distant past, but with all other Parliaments I've alluded to.

Because this method has fallen by the wayside, I've provided on each member's desk an excellent illustration from the House of Commons of Canada to guide members. I strongly believe that if this assembly can return to this more impersonal tone in question period and debate,

we can retrieve some of the lost dignity we have suffered here.

I have mentioned a number of times recently my profound respect for this institution and the unique role that the Speaker plays. For my part, I intend to be rigorous in attempts to maintain order and decorum, and I look forward to the co-operation of all members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, my question is through you to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I want to follow up on my question to him yesterday concerning his role in the Liberal slush fund scandal.

Yesterday, I asked the minister why an established organization that has been providing services to the community since 2001 through their office in Richmond Hill was denied funding by his ministry and was forced to shut down. The minister refused to answer my question, but I answered his, because the minister asked me to name the organization, and I did: My Canada Integration and Settlement Services.

The minister now has had 24 hours to think about my question. I would ask the minister now to respond to the question I asked him yesterday and am repeating today. Why did he deny My Canada Integration and Settlement Services funding?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The question asked yesterday—hopefully, I indicated to the member that there are many organizations that for years never received any funding. In fact, if I recall correctly, the gentleman in question, who is the executive director of that organization, I think I met at a round table in York region where we were talking about expanded opportunities now as a result of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, where organizations are now finding that federal spending has increased dramatically all over Ontario so that organizations like his or others are now able to apply for funding for language training and for job search programs they never had before. Most organizations are seeing a dramatic increase in the availability of funding they never saw before as a result of the agreement.

1440

Mr. Klees: That executive director, Mr. Hashim Ali, is in the gallery today. He's here today because he too would like to remind the minister of their face-to-face discussion and his appeal to the minister for funding for My Canada Integration and Settlement Services. What Mr. Hashim Ali would like to know today is why his organization, which had provided services to York region refugees and immigrants since 2001, was bypassed for funding when an organization with no history—no one

knows what they have done, no service to the community ever—received \$200,000 from this minister, which is in their account today and is providing no service. And this organization was forced to shut their doors today. Why?

Hon. Mr. Colle: One of our priorities has been to extend services into York region, because what has happened in the last number of years is that there was an out-migration of newcomers who are going from the city of Toronto and moving into York region and especially Peel region. There is now an increased number of services in that area. We've met directly with the York region United Appeal. We've met with a number of agencies. Many new services are being provided in York region because of the attention we've paid, and also because new resources are available as a result of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which flows the money directly to new programs, which flows the money directly into government of Canada programs that were never funded before. New agencies, big and small, have never had so much access to money as they have now because of that agreement. The money goes to those programs directly.

Mr. Klees: Mr. Hashim Ali, who is observing the minister's response, takes no heart from that. What he's hearing the minister say is nothing that addresses his circumstance, the 200 volunteers who have worked through his organization, or the many refugees and immigrants who are dependent on the services his organization provides and who have none today, because the \$200,000 that the minister did dump into the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre's account is doing nothing. There is not one service that's being provided as a result of that.

I want to repeat my question, through you, to the minister: Why has he denied and shut down an organization that is providing essential services to refugees and immigrants and refused to fund it, but has put \$200,000 into a shell company for no reason at all?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are a number of NSP partners, settlement agencies, that we've partnered with for years. We continue to fund their programs. We continue to also get the federal government involved now in expanding services. We've paid a great deal of attention to those services, especially in York region. We sometimes try to build capacity in new organizations. Sometimes organizations may not meet the standards of the federal government program; sometimes they don't meet the provincial program's. What we do is we continually try to find ways of building more capacity. In fact, we're building a multi-agency program, in co-operation with the federal government—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having great difficulty hearing the minister.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In fact, soon to open in York region is a York region access centre, which is going to be a

multi-agency program that's going to get \$3 million from the federal government's investments in Ontario to offer programs in York region that have never been offered before.

Expansion is happening, and we're working with all organizations, big and small, to do that.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Klees: To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: The minister stands in his place today and talks about a new organization that is going to provide services at some point in the future with some \$3 million of funding. That's not my question. My question is: Why do we have Mr. Hashim Ali here, who has a history of providing services and was denied funding, and \$200,000 of taxpayers' money is sitting in a shell account attributed to an agency where seven of the directors are all closely aligned with the Liberal Party? One of those directors will be confirmed as the Liberal candidate this weekend. Another director is, in fact, the president of the local Liberal riding association.

Speaker, will you agree that something smells here, and should the minister not respond in a straightforward way and tell us how he can justify \$200,000 in a bank account while we have a service agency that closed its doors today?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, there are agencies across the province that for years have had little attention or little investment. They're all over the province. We keep on working with agencies to get through troubled times. We've had the provincial funding. Now there is \$920 million of federal funding. We are seeing agencies across York region, the city of Toronto, all across the province, that are hiring people, increasing funding for ISAP, for host programs, settlement workers in schools. Now those gaps are being filled.

We also tried to make investments in areas where we could build greater capacity to provide even more services. Every agency, big and small, has different needs. Sometimes, there are different periods of financial difficulty. We try to help as much as we can, and we continue to do that. Overall, there's much better service delivery than there ever has been before.

Mr. Klees: The minister talks about filling gaps and building capacity. What he has just done is—he has created a gap. He shut down, this morning, My Canada Integration and Settlement Services. Shut down. We locked the door this morning. I was there.

I want to point something out. In the minister's own eligibility criteria for his settlement program, here are two of the three criteria: First, it must be incorporated as a not-for-profit organization for at least two years. His \$200,000 shell corporation, which was incorporated three days before he deposited the funds, didn't qualify. Second, it must have at least two years' experience of delivering programs and services to newcomers. None. That's \$200,000 in a bank account, with not one service delivered. Compare that to My Canada Integration and Settlement Services, since 2001. Why?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In many cases across this province, we were trying to create increased capacity to provide more services in areas that needed services. This organization that the member talks about was more than happy and more than able to apply for the new federal programs. The federal programs were there to fill the gap because we could not fund all of the programs. So the federal government has stepped in. This agency was more than able to apply for the new programs for language training, for job connect programs, for counselling services. They were all there for this agency to apply for. Because the provincial government could not meet all of these needs, the federal spending goes directly into programs. This agency could have easily applied for those dollars.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Klees: This is bizarre. For the last number of years, we've heard from this minister about how the provincial Liberal government has built capacity, how much more they are investing in newcomers. Now this minister is saying they couldn't give \$36,000 to My Canada Integration and Settlement Services but could give \$200,000 to a shell company, and this minister is directing My Canada to the federal government after all their boasting about what he, his minister and his government are doing for newcomers. Something stinks here.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the minister, through you, to explain why \$36,000 couldn't be put on the table for this organization, for Mr. Hashim Ali's organization, but they could find \$200,000 for a Liberal slush fund on the other side.

1450

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the member opposite still does not quite understand the federal-provincial agreement. This is one agreement that—for nine years, while he was in government and a minister, he never stood up in this House once and asked for fair funding for York region or Ontario; he never did it once. As a result of our hard-fought battle to get equity for Ontario, the program ensures that these existing federal programs, which only provided \$800 for a newcomer in Ontario, are now going up to \$3,400. This does not come to the treasury of Ontario. The dollars go directly into program expansion, and that is why they are available for all agencies to tap into, because those program dollars are there; they have never been there before. That member never asked for one cent from the federal government to help newcomers. Now that resource is there.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. On Friday, when the Premier answered a journalist's question, he implied that oppo-

sition members were racist because they asked questions about the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund. Later Friday evening, the Premier was forced to issue a statement that his answer to the journalist's question should have been "No."

My question today is this: When is the Premier going to apologize to opposition members for casting aspersions of racism, and when is the Premier going to do the right thing and ask the Auditor General to implement an immediate investigation and report on the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I want to take this opportunity to express my unreserved and unwavering support for the 140,000 immigrants who arrive in Ontario on an annual basis, and to ensure that we continue to provide all the necessary supports to ensure that each and every one of those new Canadians has access to all the opportunities they need to succeed and become integrated in the economy and in our society generally. I think Ontario is blessed. At a time when so many parts of the developed world have entered into a competition for immigrants, we are blessed on an annual basis to admit 140,000 new Canadians, who enrich us in every possible sense of the word.

Mr. Hampton: It's part of the Premier's job to set the tone of debate for the McGuinty government. I have to say that the Premier certainly did that. Just two days ago, a number of McGuinty Liberal backbenchers, rather than debating the opposition motion calling for the Auditor General to investigate and report on the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund, rather than addressing the unfairness to community groups left out of the slush fund, levelled thinly veiled accusations of racism against opposition members.

Premier, I ask you again: When are you going to apologize?

The Speaker: The leader might want to rephrase the question.

Mr. Hampton: When is the Premier going to apologize? When is the Premier going to show some leadership to his own backbenchers? When is the Premier going to do the right thing and ask the Auditor General to conduct an immediate investigation and report on the slush fund?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We will continue to be very aggressive in terms of standing up for the rights of immigrants in the province of Ontario, and that's in accordance with the policy changes that we've already made.

One of the things of which I'm most proud is that I was able to sit down with then-Prime Minister Martin and negotiate the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement that ensured that an immigrant arriving in the province of Ontario received the same amount of financial support as did an immigrant arriving in the province of Quebec.

We also, I'm very proud to say, have in place now fair access legislation. It's the first of its kind in Canada. It

breaks down barriers in an effort to stand up for our immigrants, and we have in place for the first time ever, now, a fairness commissioner in the person of Jean Augustine, who is there to fight for and champion the recognition of credentials for our foreign-trained professionals.

Mr. Hampton: He tries to avoid the issue, and I say to the Premier, the issue is this: Legitimate community organizations, immigrant settlement organizations, receive no funding while organizations that have no history of providing immigrant or settlement services to new Canadians, but are closely connected to the Liberal Party, got funding of \$200,000, a quarter of a million dollars.

Premier, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Toronto Sun*, the *North Bay Nugget*, the *Brantford Expositor*, the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, the *Welland Tribune*, the *Sudbury Star* and other papers across this province all say you're wrong.

My question is, when is the Premier going to stop casting aspersions of racism against members like me who simply want an accountable, transparent and fair process, and when are you going to call in the Auditor General to investigate your slush fund?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm sure the House would be interested in knowing what else we've done to benefit Ontario immigrants. In addition to our—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): We'd like to hear an apology, Dalton. Why don't you have the class to apologize?

The Speaker: Member for Erie-Lincoln. I really do need to be able to hear the Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In addition to our Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which will provide us with \$920 million in additional dollars for federal support for language training and settlement services, in addition to our fair access legislation and our fairness commissioner in the person of Jean Augustine, we have also put in place something of which I am also very proud, which is our Ontario public service internships which is a program—the first of its kind in Canada—to launch six-month internships in public service and crown agencies for internationally trained professionals.

One of the complaints that we receive from immigrants on a regular basis is that they can't get a job because they can't get workplace experience here. So, what we've done, for the first time in Canada, and have in place in our own House, is a six-month internship which allows our immigrants to gain that precious workplace experience so that they can have a stronger CV when it comes to obtaining secure employment here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: I say to the Premier, there are many good settlement and immigrant organizations in this province. But the fact is, your government has been caught using that immigrant and settlement description to float money to organizations that don't provide those services—organizations that seem to be full of Liberal

candidates, Liberal riding association presidents and other members of the Liberal Party. We think that's wrong.

I want to quote from today's *Toronto Sun* columnist Christina Blizzard:

"It's no more Mr. Nice Guy for McGuinty. He is fond of telling us about growing up in a nice Catholic family with nine brothers and sisters. He often gives us some of his mom's homespun philosophy about how to get along in one big, happy family. I suspect one of the rules she laid down was to say you're sorry when you're wrong."

1500

When are you going to apologize, Premier, for casting aspersions of racism against me and other members? When are you going to do the right thing—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: One of the other things we've heard from our immigrants that they really appreciate is that we now have in place a new loan system that provides up to \$5,000 per immigrant to cover assessment, training and exam costs.

One of the challenges you're faced with when you arrive here for the first time, if you've had professional experience, training and education elsewhere, is that you want to have those credentials recognized here in Ontario. Sometimes that necessitates that you participate in an upgrading program or some kind of licensure test—exams and the like. Many of those individuals don't have the necessary funds to participate in that, so we have in place a new program that gives up to \$4,000 per immigrant to cover their assessment, training and exam costs, all with a view to accelerating their entry into the workplace here in Ontario so they can help us further strengthen our economy.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier again attempts to avoid the issue. It would appear from some of your grants that it was all about participation in the Liberal Party.

This is what the people of Ontario have seen from the Premier: When the Parkdale-High Park by-election was going badly, the Premier responded with slanderous personal attacks against a United Church minister, Cheri DiNovo, who is now the member for Parkdale-High Park; when some of us questioned the Premier's 31% MPP pay increase, the Premier responded with attacks against us; and now, when some of us ask about this public money going to well-connected Liberal front organizations, the Premier says we are racists for asking these questions.

Premier, when are you going to apologize? When are you going to do the right thing and call in the Auditor General to examine and report on your year-end slush fund?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP is nothing if not creative.

One of the other programs that our immigrants are accessing readily has to do with bridge training. We've invested over \$53 million in more than 90 bridge training programs to help internationally trained people work in more than 100 trades and professions. Again, the ob-

jective here is to ensure that our new arrivals can be more quickly introduced into the workplace. Sometimes that calls for a little bit of a bump, a little bit of a boost to get them up to Ontario standards. We call that bridge training; we've invested \$53 million.

Everything I've heard from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tells me that that is an overwhelming success; it has been very well received by our immigrants. Again, it's all with a view to ensuring that as we begin to compete more and more for immigrants from across the world, they see Ontario as a great place to come to because you can be quickly introduced into the economy and our society.

The Speaker: Final supplementary—I would ask the leader to be careful with his phrasing.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the situation: When we question why well-connected Liberals get money from the McGuinty government and they're not providing any immigrant or settlement services, the Premier's response seems to be to cast aspersions that we're racist for asking these questions. The Premier's response seems to be that Ontarians should not expect accountability, transparency or fairness in how organizations receive grant money, and the Premier seems to take the view that long-established community organizations that didn't even know—weren't even told—about this year-end funding should not be concerned that they were completely left in the dark. All of this seems very inappropriate to the average person out there in Ontario. My question is simply this: When are you going to apologize for casting aspersions—

The Speaker: You'll probably want to rephrase that.

Mr. Hampton: When is the Premier going to apologize for casting aspersions of racism because I asked for accountability, transparency and fairness, and when are you going to call in the Auditor General to investigate—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We've got some really good news on the health care front these days, with 500,000 more Ontarians now having access to a doctor than they did three and a half years ago. But one of the things that we must continue to do is to access our health care talent that's coming to us from abroad. A couple of important pieces of information on that score: We have more than doubled the number of spaces for our international medical graduates, from 90 to over 200, in our medical schools. Beyond that, we also have, for three years running now, issued more licences to practise medicine in Ontario to individuals trained outside of Ontario than those trained inside of Ontario, and that's for the very first time.

So we're making very strong efforts to access that talent, again, with a view to understanding that if we're going to be truly competitive, if we're going to continue to build on our standard of living and our quality of life, we have to be 13 million strong. That's why we will remain very aggressive in pursuing opportunities on behalf of all of Ontario's immigrants.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): If anyone watching these proceedings is wondering why the bells are going to be ringing today and tonight, we've had a perfect example of the Premier's refusal to answer and the minister's refusal to answer. It's embarrassing and it's shameful.

My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. We've just heard from the member for Oak Ridges about how My Canada Integration and Settlement Services has had to close its doors today because they couldn't get the \$36,000 they needed to stay in operation, despite the minister and the chair of the Liberal Party campaign having \$200,000 to help their Liberal Party friends in Richmond Hill perhaps try to buy the election in that riding.

Yesterday, in response to a question from the member for Erie–Lincoln, the minister said, "All of our funding partners who are NSP agencies were given an opportunity to access sectoral improvement funds."

My question for the minister is this: Given that the minister has said previously that these slush fund monies were paid out after he had contact with hundreds of groups and then said yesterday that there was a formal process, can the minister tell us what Mr. Ali did wrong?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In the last two years, I've been at Markham town hall meetings, city hall, I've met with the YMCA of York region, we've had round tables, we've opened new offices for Employment Ontario with the Jewish Vocational Service to service York region. We're going to be opening up an access centre with the federal government in the very near future. We also worked with York region on the needs assessment that they did. They pointed out the fact that we have to expand services, whether it be with CICS, which is a long-standing Chinese immigrant aid organization that's going to expand into York region—we're funding the expansion of that because many of the newcomers into York region are Mandarin-speaking. They have never been funded. Now there is funding to expand Mandarin-speaking services into York region.

These are the investments we're making in areas that were not invested in, because they never—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: We're not getting any answers from these folks because they know this is a sleazy piece of business.

He says there's a process, and then he says there was no process because there was no time and the money had to be shovelled out the door quickly. What's the result? My Canada closes its doors and the Liberal candidate in Richmond Hill gets \$200,000 to sit in the bank while he waits for the election to approach.

It smells. People across this province are asking questions in papers and on radio call-in shows. The minister and this government continue to live under a cloud, under the stench of scandal.

Why isn't the minister interested in clearing this up? Why won't he stop stonewalling, call in the auditor and ask for an immediate report on this sorry, sorry scandal?

1510

Hon. Mr. Colle: If I could say again, these were investments made with a particular expansion into areas that were underserved, especially in Peel and York regions, that for too long have been underserved. We've also ensured for the first time that our funding partners that provide settlement services were able to get a sectoral improvement grant to fix up their premises. They were provided to organizations across this province, from the African Community Services of Peel; the Arab Community Centre of Toronto; AWIC, which services the South Asian community in Don Mills; Bloor information services; Brampton Multicultural services—it goes on and on. These are organizations that under their government didn't receive one cent to help them improve their facilities—totally ignored for nine years. Now I hear them stand up in indignation when for nine years they totally ignored this sector and really didn't care about it.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Last week, the Premier admitted that his government has routinely dished out tens of millions of dollars in year-end spending without a proper application process. The Premier and this minister must know that this is public money, not Liberal Party money.

Minister, you've had an opportunity for two weeks to dispel all of this and you haven't done anything. My question is: If you have nothing to hide, when will the minister do the right thing, clean up this mess and have the Auditor General look into where the money went?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We have, for the last number of years, looked at ways of helping this sector. We've been helping on the operational side. Now, with the federal money, there is even more help on the operational side.

We're also trying to help on the capital side. This is an area where many of these organizations across this province never had any funding, whether it be the St. George Arab Cultural Centre or settlement houses in SISO in Hamilton. They never had that. So we were able to make an investment in improving their facilities or expanding their services that had never been made before. We also know that the system is now improved because we have a direct application registry online where we can track these better. We're making these needs much more of a priority because they've been neglected for too long. We've tried our best to address this capital need, and we're going to do even better.

Mr. Prue: The minister continues to ignore the question. This McGuinty slushgate has threatened the public confidence in the government's management of public money. This falls directly under the mandate of the Auditor General Act. It is also part of your mandate. When you were sworn in as a minister, you promised, "I will be vigilant, diligent and circumspect in the performance of my duties." You have sworn this oath, and you and only you have the right, as a minister of the

crown, to call for an audit. Will the minister do the right thing, call for that audit and live up to the oath that he took?

Hon. Mr. Colle: It is within the power of that office to look at any ministry, and he can do that. The thing that I've said before, and again, is that we have many partners who have long-established records, who are trying to service a new need. We have tried to extend services in areas that have been lacking in services. We're also trying to provide support to our diverse multicultural organizations. For instance, we've invested \$500,000 in the Casa dos Açores of Ontario. For 25 years, these hard-working Canadians who come from the Azores have been trying to build a heritage community centre. They got no response. We finally partnered with them, and they're going to have a centre where they can recognize their heritage and practise their citizenship in a true open fashion—

The Speaker: Thank you.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. I want to raise a question that's on the minds of rural Ontarians: water—more specifically, well water. I know you'll have lots to say about the misleading way that the Conservative Party is choosing to fearmonger in—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Surely the member has been around long enough to know that that kind of language is certainly out of order—to use the term "misleading."

Mrs. Mitchell: I take that back.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Withdraw?

Mrs. Mitchell: I withdraw.

Frankly, it appears the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is missing in action. Clean, safe drinking water is the birthright of all Ontarians, and we all have to work together to protect it. I know that the McGuinty government has taken many steps to protect our water, and I'm proud to have supported the Clean Water Act. But sadly, the member opposite seems to have forgotten Canada's worst environmental disaster: Walkerton. Why else would he have voted against making sure that Ontarians have the best-protected drinking water in North America? If the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke really cared about making sure that all Ontarians had clean, safe—

The Speaker: The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): In response to the member, I'd certainly say that Walkerton—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We're wasting time. The member for Durham is not in his seat. Member for Halton.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Erie–Lincoln. Minister.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I'm not surprised that my friends opposite don't want to talk about water, because the Walkerton inquiry found that the cuts by the Harris-Eves government, the reckless cuts and the legacy that they have left behind, contributed to that terrible, terrible tragedy here in our province. The documents clearly show that in 1997, when those members were in office, they knew the legacy they were leaving and they chose to ignore it. Worse is the fact that they were reckless in their actions. Now they stand in the way and have voted against our government's actions to implement all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. And to make it even worse, their only contribution to their terrible legacy is scaremongering in rural Ontario. It is shameful.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I agree with the member from Huron-Bruce that if the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke really cared about making sure that all Ontario had clean, safe drinking water—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order.

Member for Northumberland.

Mr. Rinaldi:—he would have stopped fearmongering in rural Ontario, and that goes for all members of the Conservative Party who are spreading misinformation.

To the Minister of the Environment: Yesterday, I received a letter from Dr. Robert Kyle, commissioner and medical officer of health for Durham region, in response to the efforts of the Conservative Party petition, "Say No to Meters on Private Wells," being circulated. The letter states, "I am writing to confirm that the statement of the alleged 'secret agenda to require the installation of meters on all water wells in the province of Ontario' attributed to me is completely false." Instead of fear-mongering, the members of the Conservative caucus should get their facts straight.

I know that the McGuinty government has no intention of metering private wells. Would the minister take this opportunity to enlighten the members opposite and let rural Ontario know what the truth of the matter is?

Interjections.

1520

The Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton will come to order. The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I urge the members opposite to stop fearmongering, stop mischief-making. Take a moment. Read the act. Stop raising issues in rural Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I am not going warn the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke again. Minister.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I know it is a challenge for the members opposite, but take just a few minutes. I ask them, read Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. Agriculture is exempted, private homes are exempted, institutions are exempted. Let me be clear: For the 100th time, our government has absolutely no plans to meter private residential wells in Ontario, and they know it.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): If I could regain my composure after those vicious attacks, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning his slush fund. We're dealing with the fact that My Canada Integration and Settlement Services, which has been around since 2001, has had to close its doors because they couldn't get the \$36,000 they needed to stay in operation, but an animal welfare organization that had been around for barely three weeks managed to get a \$200,000 cheque, thanks to its ties to the Liberal Party. The minister has said that these slush fund payments had, and I quote, "to go through other ministers." One of those ministers is the Liberal Party campaign chair. My question for the minister is this: What direction did he get from the Liberal Party campaign chair with respect to the slush fund grants?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The organization he keeps on referring to is an organization that was incorporated in 2005, so his information is incorrect. I would also like to remind the member that these organizations across Ontario receive funding because there was great need to expand services. That's why the federal government has matched our desire to do that by unprecedented increases. For instance, the Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre has had a 104% increase in funding; the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society, a 35% increase; Catholic Cross Cultural Services, 51%; Community MicroSkills Development Centre, 38%; Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre, 43%; Fort Erie Multicultural Centre, 68%.

There are many new dollars available to centres across the province for programs, for language training—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yakabuski: The minister tells us about his stories and his visits, but I am only concerned about one visit, and that's the visit from the Liberal Party campaign chair or members of his staff: whether or not you received any visits, phone calls or notes—any direction from them—about how to give out this slush money. The minister has been very careful not to answer this question directly, and his failure to deny that he was directed by the Liberal Party campaign chair or his staff suggests that he was. The minister can clear this up with a simple answer: Who was pulling the strings: the minister or the Liberal Party campaign chair?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I know the member opposite was making fun of my visits, but the visits I made to places like the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre or the Halton—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having great difficulty hearing the Minister of Citizenship.

Hon. Mr. Colle: When I go to CultureLink here in Toronto, to AWIC in Don Mills, to the Catholic Immigration Centre in Ottawa or visit the St. Catharines

multicultural centre, those are where the real people are delivering incredible services. They've been delivering these services—job counselling, language interpreter services, job link programs. They tell me that finally you've got a government in Ontario, finally you've got federal funds flowing into buildings and services that were ignored for so long. That's who I listen to. That's whose needs we've tried to respond to. I'm proud of the investments we've made in these incredible volunteer-based organizations that for too long were ignored.

The Speaker: New question.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale—High Park): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, there are over 3,000 Tibetans in my riding, the largest community of Tibetans in North America. Last month I had the honour of meeting their President in exile. His name is the Honourable Rinpoche.

The Canadian Tibetan Association was here last week. They sat in that members' gallery. They want to know the answer to this question: Would the minister please tell this organization and the thousands of Tibetans that they represent why they were not considered worthy of funding from your year-end slush fund? Please answer.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The government of Ontario has been helping organizations for a number of years. We are now better able to help them. There are organizations of all different sizes and descriptions across Ontario. Some are providing a vast variety of services, like COSTI or SISO, which are long established. There are also emerging small organizations. We've tried to ensure that now there is funding available. It's very clear, if you ask all of the funding partners across this province, from Thunder Bay to Ottawa to Hamilton to St. Catharines, that there now is money available for these new language training programs, settlement services, even for new organizations. That's what is there. That's where the need is, and I'm glad to see that it's finally being met after being ignored.

Ms. DiNovo: With all due respect, the minister did not answer my question or the question of the Canadian Tibetan Association. They are an ethical organization; they follow His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They know a real answer when they hear it, so I'm going to ask again. Would the minister please tell this organization and the thousands of Tibetans that they represent why they were not considered worthy of funding from your year-end slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we've tried to do our best to ensure that all organizations, big and small, all advocacy groups, have had an opportunity to participate in the new federal funding and the new initiatives by our government. I have been very proud of the fact that I have gone into communities across Ontario to let them know that they can be listened to, that I've been their advocate. We fought hard for their funding from Ottawa. We fought hard to extend new programs. We now have programs existing in Ontario that never existed before, like our new loan program for all new immigrants—never existed. Our expanding bridge training programs never existed to this

extent. We've got ongoing programs to help newcomers. Sure, there are many groups that maybe need to be part of a bigger program in the future. We're trying to do that. Not all of the groups' needs have been met. We know that. That's why we've been struggling to try to get them more help, and we are proud to keep on trying to do that.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I'm proud of the support for rural communities that our government has given, and particularly the \$67-million boost that the Ministry of Agriculture received in our recent budget. It's too bad that rural members of the Conservative caucus, including the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, voted against it. It's not shocking, though, as we all know he and future PC candidate Randy Hillier have many backward views when it comes to rural Ontario. They don't even support supply management.

Our investments in agriculture stand in stark contrast to when the former Conservative government, including many of the members sitting opposite us today, gutted the ministry and closed local offices. Since coming to office, our Premier and government have championed the innovation file across rural Ontario. Rural Ontarians and farmers need to be able to tap into all future economic potential that innovation can bring.

I understand the Premier's and minister's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence were announced in March, including 55 regional award winners. We know how important it is—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. The question has been asked, I think.

1530

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'd like to thank the honourable member for her question. She certainly is a very strong advocate for rural communities, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Some members have very short memories.

Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I have to say I'm—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm not going to warn the member for Niagara Centre again.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I have to say I'm very surprised. As you would know, the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has lots to say in this Legislature. I'm very surprised that the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has not told the members of this Legislative Assembly that constituents of his—wonderful agriculture pioneers, the Klaesi family—were the recipients of the minister's award this year. They received \$50,000.

I want to tell you about the Klaesi innovation. Fritz and Paul Klaesi of Renfrew county have adopted an-

aerobic digester technology on their farm operation. Unlike their member, who is in favour of coal, the Klaesis understand that it's very important to invest in innovation in clean energy. And our Premier has established awards to reward people—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Smith: I'm glad that our government is standing up for the people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because clearly their member isn't.

Along with innovation, it's also important that governments recognize the need to invest in rural infrastructure and rural development. In my riding, we recently received \$4.2 million of investment through the rural infrastructure investment initiative, and my local communities are delighted at the funding. We've also received over \$20 million in roads and bridges in COMRIF funding.

My riding is not alone. Other communities, like my neighbours to the east in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, have benefited from our government's investments in rural Ontario. We know the member opposite tries to stand in the place of progress and in no way acknowledges any positive initiatives, so I'm going to ask that the minister perhaps provide the House with more information on the good news of what's going on in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I don't know about you. I thought I heard the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke say, "Put some real money on the table." I'm very happy to say that our government has put some real money on the table for the riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and I have to say that I'm surprised, when the member has so much to say on other issues, that he's really quite quiet on the investment that the McGuinty government has made in his riding.

Let me remind the member that we have invested \$3.1 million through the rural infrastructure investment initiative, \$1.8 million to the rural economic development program and over \$12 million through the COMRIF program. That's in his riding. The people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke won't hear that from him. I'm saying, as minister, that's the commitment that the McGuinty government has to the people in rural Ontario and to the people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Citizenship—before I do, I want to say, boy, we're going to miss that Minister of Agriculture after October 10. Boy, oh boy—highly entertaining.

The Minister of Citizenship—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We're wasting time.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Labour will come to order.

Member for Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning his slush fund: The minister knows that My Canada provided services in English, French, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Pashto, Afghan-Pashto, Pakistani, Farsi, Arabic and Spanish, to name but some. They had free seniors' computer classes, seniors' drop-in, a citizens' test preparation course, an English conversation café, and many more programs. I'd like to know from the minister exactly which one of these programs didn't qualify for the minister's slush fund.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Service provision across York region or Toronto is very comprehensive, and there are many agencies that deliver services of different varieties. The good news is that in York region, as I said, it has been a priority area for investment. That's why we've opened a new Jewish Vocational Service office with Employment Ontario to provide employment linkages there. That's why we've expanded the services in the Mandarin-speaking community of York region. That's why I've met with the YMCA in York region. That's why we've had round tables with Mayor Scarpitti in Markham. That's why we've had meetings with the Markham Board of Trade to hire more immigrants. That's why we've had meetings with the Brampton Board of Trade to hire more immigrants. That's why we met with the Mississauga Board of Trade we partnered with to hire more immigrants.

Services and programs for newcomers have never been as expansive in Ontario, in the GTA, as they have been in the last two years.

Mr. Hudak: Sadly, the minister refuses to answer a very simple question about My Canada before the assembly today. Services in at least a dozen languages, services to newcomers, computer programs, seniors' drop-ins—all programs that were alive and vibrant until today. They had to close down the facility because the minister turned his back on My Canada. Instead, the minister chose to give \$200,000, a whopping grant, to another organization stacked with well-connected Liberals, including, coincidentally, a Liberal candidate in the next provincial election. Any reasonable person would think that My Canada would qualify for funding. You'd think they would fit the bill, but evidently they didn't have enough Liberals on their board and evidently they didn't have enough Liberal candidates on their board. Evidently they didn't contribute to the right Liberal campaign. Will the minister come clean, fund My Canada and call in the Auditor General?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've also attended meetings in the growing area north of Toronto, in the Vaughan-York region area, in Peel, where there are many newcomers moving in at a faster rate than they're coming into Toronto. That's why I've been constant in visiting these centres that are providing new services now, that are opening up new offices. For the first time in 20 years,

they're hiring new settlement workers. For the first time in 20 years, they're hiring new workers to go into schools. For the first time, we are partnering with boards of trade to hire new immigrants. For the first time, we've created immigration hubs for newcomers to come to. York region is now an immigration hub that we are investing in to create services under a one-stop centre in York region. We've done that in Niagara region too. We're doing that in Windsor. We're doing that in Sudbury. These are new services—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Clearly the McGuinty Liberals' lack of transparency and accountability has gone from being an illness to a full-fledged epidemic. I would suggest that the minister has failed to serve Ontario's new citizens and his government has failed to properly manage public money. This House has no trust in the minister's government, and this scandal is threatening public confidence in his ability to handle public money.

My question is a simple one: Why is the minister afraid of the Auditor General? What in heaven's name do you think he's going to uncover if he looks at your books?

Hon. Mr. Colle: For two years, we have done exceptionally good work with our partners in helping new immigrants across this province. I'll stack my track record of helping new immigrants against either party's, any time.

1540

PETITIONS

GAS WELLS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition called "Preserve Our Gas Wells." It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas southern Ontario has had a localized gas well industry since the 1840s; and

"Whereas gas wells provide an efficient form of heat and energy for rural landowners and farmers; and

"Whereas inconsistent bureaucratic interpretation of regulations and often antagonistic enforcement measures threaten the financial viability of this natural resource;

"We, the undersigned, request as follows:

"That the McGuinty government investigate the Ministry of Natural Resources petroleum division and direct civil servants to work proactively and positively with landowners and farmers to review the government's approach based on the following principles:

"(a) respect for property owners, and

"(b) consistent and fair treatment of gas well owners."

I have signed my signature.

COURT SUPPORT STAFF

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): "Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas 1,400 members of the Attorney General's court support staff who are working under the flexible, part-time ... model, otherwise referred to as appendix 32 under a collective agreement between Management Board of Cabinet, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union negotiated in the spring of 2005, are working hundreds of hours per week in the service of the Attorney General for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas under the FPT agreement many court support staff are working as many as 20 hours or more per week for which payment is being withheld and will not be paid until months later; and

"Whereas when the makeup pay does eventually get paid, up to 50% may be lost to taxes because of the taxation year into which the payment may fall; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff who are ... forced to work under these conditions are single mothers with fixed living expenses who incur employment-related expenses such as child care and travel costs for those hours that they are required to work but for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas in many cases these expenses are impossible to pay without the offsetting income which is being withheld by the Attorney General under the FPT agreement; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff have been left no other choice but to resign from these impossible working conditions and, in many cases, are being forced onto the welfare rolls by the very government for which they are providing hundreds of hours of work for which they are not being paid...."

I move on to the address to the assembly:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the Premier, the Attorney General and the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet to take whatever steps are necessary to change the offensive provisions of the FPT agreement as set out in appendix 32 and ensure that the Attorney General's court support staff receive fair treatment as employees of the government and that among other unfair provisions of the agreement, the practice of withholding pay for hours worked cease immediately."

That's signed by Carol Maclean and many others, and I've affixed my signature as well.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Fairness for Families in the 905 Belt." I want to extend thanks to Lynda deMelo of Brampton for collecting the signatures for us. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the population of the greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in

the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions to social issues and human services needs;

"Whereas the 2007-08 Ontario budget proposes aggressive and badly needed increases in operating funding to build and strengthen capacity in developmental and social services agencies and to invest in helping the young, the weak, the needy and the vulnerable; and

"Whereas the social and human services sectors in the 905 belt have historically received per capita funding far below that of other regions despite facing far greater growth in the populations they serve, and this per capita funding gap has increased in the last four years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the 2007-08 Ontario budget implementing measures to strengthen Ontario's families be passed without delay, and that the first priority for the allocation of new funding in meeting the government of Ontario's commitment to fairness for families flow to the social services agencies serving cities within the 905 belt, and that funding for programs to serve the 905 belt be allocated to established or growing agencies located within the 905 belt."

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Zane to carry it for me.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition regarding lab services at Muskoka Algonquin hospital.

"Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

"Whereas MAHC has indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive \$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the impact of such decisions will negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie."

I support this.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): This petition deals with raising the minimum wage.

"Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

"Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

"Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario's working families earn a living wage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP's living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour."

I agree with this petition and sign it myself and will be giving it to page Dillon to deliver.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we, as members of the Sikh community in the province of Ontario, wish to express our extreme disappointment in the conduct of the leader of the official opposition, John Tory;

"Whereas John Tory's allegations and slanderous comments towards our cultural and religious institutions, which recently received grants from the government of Ontario, are an utter insult to the hard work, dedication and commitment of the thousands of volunteers that devote so much of their time to serve the people of Ontario;

"Whereas accusations of our non-partisan institutions receiving grants solely due to the political views of individual members of our executives are completely baseless, ill-founded, and speak volumes of Mr. Tory and his Conservative Party's continued ignorance towards ethnic minorities;

"Whereas Mr. Tory's claims of his concerns revolving around the process on how these grants were awarded, as opposed to the names of the actual recipients, simply do not add up considering his consistent selective scrutiny on a few organizations, comprising only 25% of the total funds distributed;

"We, the undersigned, who believe that Mr. Tory has the good conscience"—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is obviously an ad hominem attack against a member of the Legislative Assembly and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The petition is in order.

The petition.

Mr. Kular: —"to recognize his gross error in judgment, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand John Tory apologize to the House, and accept this as our formal invitation to him and his caucus to visit each of the Sikh institutions that were grant recipients, so

that they may gain a better understanding of the selfless efforts made by thousands of volunteers to make this province a better place to live."

I agree with the petitioners so I put my signature on the petition as well.

1550

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights; and

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions; and

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visit, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I support this petition. I sign it and hand it in with page Zane.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario and owners of property in Point Clark and members of the Point Clark Beach Association, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the following:

"Whereas there is considerable merit in and public support for the restoration of the Point Clark lakeshore, specifically the improvement of water quality and beach conditions from Amberley Road to Pine River;

"Whereas, due to low lake levels, the presence of man-made ... jetties, the invasion of certain plant species, the population explosion of certain migratory and non-migratory bird species, poorly maintained and managed septic systems, and manure and fertilizer runoff, the foul odour and health conditions have rendered the beach unfit for human activities; and

"Whereas the said deterioration and human health risk are seriously and negatively impacting on the residential and tourist activities in the area;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly to undertake any and all legal and regulatory measures required to clean up the said conditions and to restore the ecosystem to a natural state."

I affix my signature to the petition.

GAS WELLS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A petition on the "Preserve Our Gas Wells" campaign reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas southern Ontario has had a localized gas well industry since the 1840s; and

"Whereas gas wells provide an efficient form of heat and energy for rural landowners and farmers; and

"Whereas inconsistent bureaucratic interpretation of regulations and often antagonistic enforcement measures threaten the financial viability of this natural resource;

"We, the undersigned, request as follows:

"That the McGuinty government investigate the Ministry of Natural Resources petroleum division and direct civil servants to work proactively and positively with landowners and farmers to review the government's approach based on the following principles:

"(a) respect for property owners, and

"(b) consistent and fair treatment of gas well owners."

Underneath the signature of Bob Mackie of Lincoln, I'll sign my signature as well.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the right to join a union and to fully participate in free collective bargaining is recognized by the United Nations through its International Labour Organization as a fundamental human right; and

"Whereas part-time workers at the province's universities and secondary schools have the right to free collective bargaining;

"Whereas these part-time ... workers do the same work as their full-time counterparts;

"Whereas this work is often performed without comparable rights and remuneration;

"Whereas these workers are subject to discriminatory treatment by their employer;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada to deny this basic right to part-time college workers;

"Whereas there is no rationale for denying bargaining rights to these employees; and

"Whereas the abuse of part-time workers is having an impact on the quality of education college students receive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to extend full collective bargaining rights to part-time college workers."

There are hundreds and hundreds of names here. I agree with this petition and I'll be signing it.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, as members of the Sikh community in the province of Ontario, wish to express our extreme disappointment in the conduct of the leader of the official opposition, John Tory;

"Whereas John Tory's allegations and slanderous comments towards our"—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I want to call your attention to standing order 38(d)(ii) detailing the presentation of petitions. Standing order 38(d)(ii) says that petitions should "contain a clear, proper and respectful request that the House take some action within its authority." Standing order 38 further says that petitions will conform with the standing orders.

The petition that the member from Mississauga is reading today appears to be outside the standing orders. It's not calling for the House to take any particular action, and the nature is certainly not in line with the type of language that fits with the standing orders of this assembly. I believe that the petition read by the member from Mississauga is in violation of standing order 38.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I think it's the tradition of this place that petitions, when presented in the manner the member from Erie—Lincoln is talking about, would have received a stamp from the table indicating that such has been reviewed. I respectfully suggest that if it does have the stamp on it, it would have complied with the member's concern within the standing orders he's quoting.

I would bow to the understanding that if the stamp were in place and received from the table, it would have been reviewed and would very clearly have been recommended. If it was not in compliance with the standing orders—I personally have been denied the stamp because my petition was out of order. So if it is being read, it's being read with the stamp. Therefore, I would respectfully suggest that there are no orders broken here.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the chief government whip and member for Brantford's comments. I will still look for a Speaker's ruling on the petition. There's no doubt that sometimes—the Speaker knows and members know—rhetoric can get quite strong in the Legislature. There can be a heated debate, as we've seen in question period these last three weeks. One wonders, though, if these types of petitions being used for ad hominem attacks against a particular member as opposed to calling on the House to take a particular action are a slope we don't want to slip down. I think the nature and the political discussion of these types of petitions, when they're maligning an individual member of the assembly, would not be how we'd want to conduct our petitions going forward, and I hope the Speaker will take time to review the exact language of the petition and come back with recommendations to members of the House.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, applying the rules as strictly as my friend from Erie—Lincoln has suggested would mean that many of the petitions I've heard from the oppo-

sition—I always cite the biblical quotation from John, 8: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." One would then have to review many of the petitions I've heard that have denigrated the Premier of Ontario in the context of a petition. So when I hear opposition members get up, as is their wont, I remind members of the House and you, Mr. Speaker, of many of the petitions I've listened to that have emanated from the opposition benches recently that might not fit the strict criteria that my friend from Erie—Lincoln has suggested all petitions should meet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): This will be the last one, because it is now 4 o'clock.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly my colleague the veteran member from Niagara and Minister of Tourism would agree: I think there should be one rule for everyone and that we should ensure that petitions read before the assembly conform with the standing orders. I believe the member would agree with me that this one certainly does not.

The Acting Speaker: Obviously a great many points have been made here. I'm going to allow the member to summarize and conclude, very rapidly, what he was attempting to say, and I will take it under advisement and report back to the House. The points on all sides of this issue are well taken, and perhaps we need to take a closer look at how petitions are read.

Please summarize as quickly as you can.

Mr. Fonseca: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To summarize:

"We, the undersigned, who believe that Mr. Tory has the good conscience to recognize his gross error in judgment, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand John Tory apologize to the House and accept this as our formal invitation to him and his caucus to visit each of the Sikh institutions that were grant recipients, so that they may gain a better understanding of the selfless efforts made by thousands of volunteers to make this province a better place to live."

I affix my signature to this petition and will deliver it by page Omar.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING BUSINESS THROUGH A SIMPLER TAX SYSTEM ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 VISANT À RENFORCER LES ENTREPRISES GRÂCE À UN RÉGIME FISCAL PLUS SIMPLE

Mr. Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2007 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 174, Loi édictant la Loi de 2007 sur

les impôts et apportant des modifications complémentaires et autres à diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Sorbara.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to advise you and members of the House that I'm going to be sharing my time with the Minister of Revenue and my parliamentary assistant, the member from Pickering-Ajax, and I'm proud that we are beginning second reading debate of this very important bill.

I'm only going to be speaking for a moment or two, as I know that the Minister of Revenue, who will be carrying this matter through the Legislature and be responsible for the implementation of the bill, should it pass, has a great deal more to say and will be speaking to some of the real benefits that this act is going to provide right across the province of Ontario.

Just by way of introduction, I would remind members of this House that it was last October that we signed, on behalf of the government of Ontario, a memorandum of agreement with the man whom I call my predecessor and counterpart—the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty—really, an historic agreement to begin this whole process. The agreement, in summary, provided for a single corporate tax collection system in the province of Ontario, in partnership with the federal government.

The initiative will provide enormous benefits for businesses large and small, right across the province of Ontario. The idea is simplicity itself: Rather than businesses in the province submitting a corporate tax return and corporate tax payments to the provincial government under one set of rules and to the federal government under another set of rules, we are working towards, under this memorandum of agreement and this piece of legislation, a single collection system with a single set of rules, with a single form.

Our own estimates are that millions and millions of dollars in so-called compliance costs will be saved by business. This will affect the largest of corporate entities in Ontario to the very smallest corporate entities. In fact, I believe that it's small business in Ontario that will be one of the true beneficiaries.

I would also like to say that in setting up a single set of rules for businesses, we contemplate at this time that there will be savings in the neighbourhood of \$100 million in direct tax savings. That's above and beyond the savings that will come from the avoidance of compliance costs.

It cuts out red tape. All of us in this Legislature know that businesses, large and small, have a lot to say about the paper burden that governments at the municipal, provincial and federal level provide to business. I think, frankly, that if you look over the course of the past decade, this is the single most important initiative in reducing the regulatory and red tape burden that our businesses are saddled with.

In going forward, the Minister of Revenue, my friend Minister Chan, will be responsible for the transition to

this single corporate tax collection system, including seeing Bill 174 through the legislative process. He will be playing a very important role as we move ahead. I had the opportunity to plant the seed. I know that my colleague and friend the Minister of Revenue and this House are going to give enthusiastic support to this piece of legislation, the real beneficiaries of which are businesses right across the province of Ontario.

Hon. Michael Chan (Minister of Revenue): I want to thank the Minister of Finance for his kind introduction. I appreciate his work so far in shepherding Bill 174 to this point.

Although I have spoken in the Ontario Legislature already this season, it's my distinct honour to be addressing my colleagues today in what I consider my inaugural speech. It is a special moment for me and my family. Before I go any further, I would like to thank my family: my wife, Elaine, and my two sons, Alex and Brian. They have been a constant source of strength and encouragement that I am very grateful for.

One of the main reasons I am here today is my 93-year-old father. He has always loved politics and has always placed a high value on community service. My father survived two wars and then became a teacher, which was one of the ways he felt he could serve his community. He studied politics, but because of the war in China, he fled to Hong Kong and settled there. It is from my father that I learned the importance of public service and giving back to the community.

When I arrived in Ontario almost 40 years ago, I was fortunate to settle in a great community and province. The people who settled in Markham have very similar stories to mine. Through their hard work, they have become engineers, teachers, doctors and business people. The list is endless. They all work hard to make Markham the outstanding community that it is.

I want to thank the people of Markham for recently electing me to represent them in this House. Without them, I would not be here. Fulfilling their faith and trust in me is a responsibility I take very seriously. I not only speak for the people of Markham, I am one of them. I am an immigrant who, like so many, came to Canada with very little and have been given so much. I had many hopes and aspirations when I arrived. I hope that through my position here I will be able to fulfill some of the aspirations and goals of the people of Markham.

The future for Markham is very bright. We have a business community that is growing by leaps and bounds. We have a proud heritage of cultural diversity and harmony that is unique in Ontario. Markham is also a world leader in emerging technologies. We have a rich balance of culture, community and confidence. I appreciate the confidence that the people of Markham have placed in me and look forward to continuing to represent them in this House.

I am very proud to be part of the McGuinty government and all that it has accomplished to date. The McGuinty government echoes my own values, hopes and principles. It is a government that stands for the things I

believe in: opportunity, education and health care. I want to thank Premier Dalton McGuinty for having the confidence in me to appoint me to his cabinet. I plan to live up to my responsibilities and justify that confidence.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the Honourable John Roberts, who recently passed away. His dedication and passion for public service captured my imagination and continue to inspire me. He gave me my first encounter with political life and what it means to put your support behind a great leader. I want to take this time to acknowledge John Roberts for playing such a big role in putting me on the path that led me here today.

I would also like to thank John McCallum, who has shared with me many valuable lessons. He has been a great friend and mentor. He and I share a love for the values of the Liberal Party and a firm commitment to the people of Markham.

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As Minister of Revenue, there are a lot of things my ministry does beyond tax collection. We are spearheading a number of educational programs, including joint seminars one with our federal counterpart, the Canada Revenue Agency, as well as a groundbreaking high school program on responsible citizenship. We are working with public and private sector organizations to foster better relationships. With partners such as the Ministry of Labour, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and CRA, we participate in tax information forums. We are introducing Internet-based and customer-driven tools to simplify and enhance tax compliance.

We are also introducing an enhanced telephone channel, implementing a toll-free number to access all Ministry of Revenue services and information. We have 63 Service Ontario centres across the province. We are enhancing the training of staff in tax legislation, as well as in new service delivery modes.

All this adds up to a dramatic improvement in providing Ontario businesses with a more simplified tax system, easier access to information and a more fair and transparent system that is efficient and increasingly customer-service-driven.

The Ministry of Revenue is also modernizing the Ontario tax system to make it a world leader. Through enhanced administration capabilities and a more state-of-the-art system, businesses will benefit from the highest levels of customer service.

Revenue is also extensively involved in fighting the underground economy throughout the province. With more auditors involved in more activities, we are helping to decrease tax avoidance and increase tax compliance to level the playing field for all businesses in Ontario.

I have been learning very quickly about the Ministry of Revenue accomplishments, challenges and future direction to better serve Ontarians. I look forward to the challenging months ahead. My team and I are energized and ready to fulfill the mandate of the ministry.

We all know that time is money. That is why I am pleased to speak to you today about Bill 174, the Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System

Act, 2006. Inefficiencies in Ontario's corporate tax structure are costing our businesses time and money. Not only are these inefficiencies unnecessary, but they can be substantially reduced through Bill 174.

For some time now, Ontario businesses have asked us to reduce administrative overlap and duplication. For some time now, they have told us they need a more competitive economy that reduces costs and simplifies tax rules. We could not agree more. This legislation recognizes these concerns and presents a more streamlined tax administration for Ontario businesses.

In October last year, my colleague the Honourable Minister Sorbara met with federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty to sign a memorandum of agreement that will see businesses file a single, combined federal and Ontario corporate income tax return for taxation years ending after 2008. Combined corporate tax instalments to the Canada Revenue Agency would start as early as February 2008. In short, Ontario businesses would benefit from a single tax form, a single tax collector, and a single set of income tax rules and audits.

Today, I would like to emphasize once again how Bill 174 will help the businesses of this province by expanding opportunities and strengthening our economy.

Following my remarks, the honourable member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, Mr. Wayne Arthurs, will provide further detail about the bill itself.

Bill 174 will combine two existing statutes, the Corporations Tax Act and the Income Tax Act, into a single new piece of legislation: the Taxation Act, 2006.

Under the new legislation, if passed, all Ontario businesses will spend less time on paperwork and save up to \$100 million annually in compliance costs by moving to one set of tax forms, one audit process and one set of rules. Businesses will save a further \$90 million a year from a harmonized corporate income tax base. Red tape will be reduced as the Taxation Act is less than one half the size of the measures it replaces.

Ontario is not the first province to pursue the advantages of a simplified corporate system. The government of Canada currently has a tax collection agreement for corporate income tax with all the provinces and territories except Quebec, Ontario and Alberta. This bill will lead to an amended tax collection agreement for Ontario that will include corporate income tax.

This legislation is the answer to the concerns voiced time and again by our province's business community. This legislation will allow businesses to spend less time on paperwork and more time doing what they should be doing: creating jobs and fostering a strong economy. The bottom line is that this bill will make it easier for business to do business.

Bill 174 takes great strides towards enhancing Ontario's business climate. It is, however, one of the many key initiatives our government has proposed, and implemented, to expand opportunities for businesses and ensure Ontario's continued economic strength.

On March 22, 2007, my colleague the Honourable Greg Sorbara presented our government's fourth budget.

With our 2007 budget, we have left behind the deficits we inherited and entered into a new era of balanced budgets and sustainable surpluses.

We see this new era as an opportunity for us to become an even stronger Ontario. The 2007 Ontario budget proposes more measures to simplify tax compliance and administration and support corporate income tax base harmonization, a move that directly complements the provisions of Bill 174.

In the budget, we've proposed a variety of measures that speak, as does this bill, to our commitment to foster a strong business climate, including:

- accelerating the elimination of capital tax to July 1, 2010, from January 1, 2012;
- reducing high business education tax rates by \$540 million, benefiting more than half a million businesses in 321 municipalities across the province; and
- providing over \$2 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, which helps young Canadians create their own successful businesses.

In addition, to help support a strong, dynamic and globally competitive business environment in Ontario, the 2007 budget also includes:

- a four-year extension of the apprenticeship training tax credit and the addition of six eligible trades;
- significant investment in electricity infrastructure;
- significant initiatives as part of a \$1.7-billion investment over five years to 2009-10 in research and innovation;
- the establishment of a new Ontario Manufacturing Council;
- enhancements to certain entertainment industry tax credits; and
- significant initiatives supporting Ontario's tourism, entertainment and creative industries.

The implementation of Bill 174 will present a period of transition for businesses and staff. We know that this bill means some people who are working for us will be working for the federal government. The provincial and federal governments have appointed lead negotiators to conclude a human resources agreement. The human resources agreement will include details on terms and conditions of employment of staff who choose to accept offers with the CRA. The negotiators have been meeting regularly and will do so until an agreement is concluded. We will continue to work with affected staff and their bargaining agents to help ensure this process is both fair and transparent for all.

Businesses have told us that they do not want to wait until implementation of a single return in 2009 to start realizing compliance cost savings from a single corporate tax administration. They want to realize these benefits as soon as they can, and so do we. Both our ministry and the CRA are looking at ways to achieve cost savings to businesses by integrating some administration processes for taxation years prior to 2009 such as audits, rulings and appeals. We look forward to our businesses realizing these cost savings as soon as possible once the human resources and transition agreements are concluded.

1620

This bill is good news for Ontario's businesses and a fine example of what can be accomplished when governments work together.

We are proud of the progress we have achieved in our bid for fairness from the federal government on behalf of the people of Ontario. But there is more that needs to be done.

This bill helps to build a continued productive working relationship with the federal government, and it is in our mutual best interests to work well together. A strong Ontario is a strong Canada, and a stronger Ontario is a stronger Canada.

The Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act, 2006, is a major step forward in creating an enhanced business environment for a stronger Ontario. I now ask the honourable members for their support of Bill 174 so that we can enhance Ontario's business climate and expand opportunity for all.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm particularly pleased to join in the debate this afternoon in respect to Bill 174.

Before going into any detail, though, I simply want to take the opportunity to congratulate Minister Chan on his victory in Markham, on arriving here in this Legislature, and on his appointment to cabinet as the new Minister of Revenue.

I want to make a few other comments, because Minister Chan took the opportunity, and rightfully so, to talk a little bit about his background, about his life here in Canada and the support of his family in his coming here to represent the people of Markham and the people of Ontario, particularly as a member of government within cabinet.

Each of us has our history, I think, in respect to how we arrive in this place. Some of us, as in Michael Chan's case—Minister Chan came from a different continent as a young person, with little except the desire to be successful, with the skills and the intellectual capacities to grow a business and build a family and contribute to his community.

In my case, probably not unlike some others in this Legislature, I was born here in Canada. Language is not a barrier. But like Minister Chan, I came to the province of Ontario as a very young person, probably about two years old. My mother, being a single parent, having left the east coast of this country from the coal mining town of Springhill, Nova Scotia, came to Ontario, where, in the early 1950s, the streets were paved with gold if you were coming from some other parts of the country. In much the same way that Minister Chan came to this country, she came to Ontario with little in her pockets, and in her case with a very young son, without employment prospects, to build a new life in Canada for her family, she and I. So in that sense I share a lot, I think, with Minister Chan, with our similar kinds of backgrounds in the context of growing up in a place that we might not have

been familiar with but also of having family who support you and a growing family and success.

So I want to congratulate him again on his ascension to this Legislature from humble beginnings in this country and the success that he has had.

I'm pleased to join in the debate in respect to Bill 174, the Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act, 2006. It's a clear indicator that when governments work together, when those in leadership roles—in our particular case, Minister Sorbara and our federal counterpart, Minister Flaherty—find a means in which they can work hand in hand, co-operatively, we all benefit.

In this particular case, the benefactors are the businesses in the province of Ontario that strengthen the Ontario economy, and, might I suggest, in doing that strengthen the Canadian economy. In doing all of those things, they provide opportunities in this great province not only for the profit of those who manage and grow those businesses, but for the employees who participate in those businesses—and the opportunity for those businesses to create new job opportunities.

This issue of corporate tax harmonization certainly is not a new one. When I first arrived here in the fall of 2003, it was only a few months later that a constituent of mine who at an earlier time, in the late 1980s, had been an assistant deputy minister within government, within the finance area—he left that post in the early part of the 1990s to pursue a private sector agenda, using his skills set in economics and finance to build a consulting capacity in which he's worked with both public and private sector initiatives.

During my first few months here, that former ADM approached me with some thoughts around corporate tax harmonization. I have to say it was something that was certainly new to me, and even to this extent I don't have the depth of knowledge that I might like. But I took the opportunity to speak at that time with Minister Phillips, in his capacity on Management Board, with whom I was working then as his parliamentary assistant, to talk to him briefly about some thoughts on corporate tax harmonization at the same time other conversations were going on. So it's not something that kind of popped up last month, but it is something that the leadership of Minister Sorbara and Minister Flaherty, with due credit for those with the direct responsibility, has been able to start, this process, and get us to where we are.

Working together, they established, as the ministers were saying, an MOU in October of last year that provides for that kind of co-operative agreement on a go-forward basis, and thus provides for the Minister of Revenue and his ministry the opportunity, as we work our way through this legislation, to move it through this process in a supportive fashion but then have the onerous responsibility of seeing it implemented, seeing it come to fruition in a relatively short period of time for government actions, so that business can begin to take advantage of the economic opportunity that exists from that harmonization immediately, as well as the full imple-

mentation by the time those corporate tax filings occur within a year or so.

I want to speak a little bit more, Mr. Speaker. I'll probably, as we often do, reinforce some things that have been said by Minister Chan, because he's covered it so well and thoroughly, and maybe add a few other elements to the whole process that will help strengthen and broaden our understanding of what we're doing.

This particular piece of legislation will mean that the Ministry of Revenue, the Ministry of Finance, the CRA—Canadian Revenue Agency—and businesses across Ontario are all going to benefit from this process. Clearly it's not just a business opportunity, it's also a government opportunity. If we can streamline processes to demand less of us as governments doing the work that needs to be done not once but twice, that's good for us. It's also obviously good for business. The legislation, Bill 174, responds not only to businesses' needs but their demands, their call upon to us to simplify tax administration in all ways possible. This is one of those ways, and it's a significant one to business. It's something they've been asking to see done for some considerable time, and we've had the good opportunity, the good judgment, to work with our federal counterparts, in their co-operation, to get to us where we are. This will reduce compliance costs for business and enable the Canada Revenue Agency to streamline its services and reduce its administrative costs as well.

If this legislation moves through this place and ultimately is enacted—and I'm confident that at the end of the day the members here will see the wisdom in supporting this legislation—the Canada Revenue Agency will administer a variety of Ontario tax structures. They'll administer Ontario's corporate income tax. They'll have responsibility for Ontario's corporate minimum tax. They'll have additional responsibilities for its capital tax structures and special additional tax levies that are engaged on life insurers. Each of those has its own intricacies that I don't understand well—that's why we have the experts within the ministries, those who are career professionals in these areas—but each of them is an important part of the tax structure that we have for business here in the province of Ontario.

The province itself, though, will continue to administer a number of matters more directly related to our activity and that aren't as easily harmonized in a federal jurisdiction. Those will include the Ontario mining tax. It will include insurance premiums tax that the province is engaged in. It will include Electricity Act payments in lieu of federal and Ontario corporate taxes and the transfer tax. So there are electricity matters and insurance matters and mining taxes there that are more directly attributable to the provincial frame of reference and aren't as easily harmonized into some federal-provincial amalgam.

The CRA will also continue to provide the same services to Ontario businesses that it currently provides to them and that it provides to other provinces under the tax collection agreements that currently exist. So we're

going to be in some commonality with things that are happening in other jurisdictions; we're going to bring ourselves more in line with what's happenings in other jurisdictions. Those will include things like the payment processing that occurs. The processing of those tax returns will be done under a single jurisdiction. The verification and auditing of those that are often necessary and part of the process will be done by one government body, not by two different government bodies. This cuts down on the capacity for confusion, if you have one body concentrating on it.

1630

Any appeals processes will be handled through the CRA. Various rulings under those appeals and the collection of accounts receivable will come under one jurisdiction. The accounts receivable are obviously a matter of concern to all governments, and if you have only one government agency collecting accounts receivable on all corporate taxes, it means that when you go to that corporate entity that has outstanding tax obligations or outstanding obligations to government, you can work on collecting all of that in a structured and reasonable fashion. It means that the CRA doesn't have to go out and collect its accounts receivable, and somewhere over here, Ontario—not in line with what the federal government, the CRA, is doing—is trying to go out and collect them on its own, but not necessarily doing it at the same time and in the same way.

Now you have businesses saying, "We know we have the accounts receivable. We have the CRA on our case to come current," if it's a backlog situation. Then a month or two later, you have the Ontario system coming after you to do much the same thing. If we have one coordinated effort in doing that, business understands it better if there are negotiations that are necessary, if there are payment schedules that are necessary. At least then, it's something that businesses can reasonably deal with: one set of tax collectors rather than two sets of tax collectors. I can't think of anything worse than two sets of tax collectors on my case. One is more than enough when April 30 comes each year, to think that I have to have my taxes in and ready to go, let alone concern that I'm going to have two tax men at my door. It's bad enough that I have the municipal tax collector after me on occasion.

Minister Chan mentioned as well that this means that Ontario businesses will benefit from one tax form, a single tax form, not two; one tax collector—one more than we'd all like to have, I suppose; and one set of income tax rules. Playing by one set of rules is a lot easier than trying to play by two sets of rules. It's certainly easier for the business. It's certainly easier for those in the accounting capacity, in payroll, in receivables and in whatever else they have to have within their business structure to be able to do that in one fashion, rather than having that individual or those individuals duplicating the effort in many ways.

Minister Sorbara spoke to some compliance cost savings. The estimates that we have at this point in time,

if this bill is enacted, are that it will cut those tax compliance costs for Ontario businesses by up to \$100 million a year. That's not just a few million; that's tens of millions—\$100 million in compliance cost savings to businesses in Ontario. That's money that can be reinvested into this economy. That's money that can create new business opportunities and create new jobs here in the province. It will allow Ontario businesses to spend less time on paperwork and more time creating jobs and fostering that strong economy that we're all so anxious to see continue. Right now, the country is having a very good economic climate. I was reading the paper this morning and looking at the business analysis. We're on a roll. Others, internationally, are looking to us for leadership. They're looking at our sustained balanced budgets. I'm pleased that Ontario has entered into that realm, along with our federal counterparts, who led the charge 10 years ago. I'm pleased that it's our government that has allowed us to catch up with what's happening, because it's proving to be valuable in providing dividends internationally. The international community looks to us now as the kind of place that they want to invest in, the kind of place that has that kind of stability. This will only help to enhance that particular environment.

If this legislation is enacted, corporate taxpayers will begin making combined Ontario-federal instalment payments to the Canada Revenue Agency as early as February 2008. That, for some, may seem a little ways away yet; I guess we're still 10 months away from that. But in government parlance, that's not very long, and thus there is a certain urgency with respect to this particular piece of legislation. Within the limited time we now have before this Legislature will come to closure, before this session will come to closure and we move into election mode, and following the election, with the time it takes to ramp up after that, regardless of whether the current government remains in power—which I very much hope they do, but in the event that that weren't the case for some reason or there was some other configuration, as governments ramp up, there's always a bit of a lag time. We can't afford that lag time within this context if we are going to do for business what we are committed to do, what they want to do and what I believe we all agree should be happening.

There is an urgency during this time we have before us to ensure that this piece of legislation has the necessary debate here in second reading and gets due consideration following that, whether it be at committee and/or here in third reading, whatever may come from this process at the end of second reading.

Corporations in Ontario will begin filing a single tax return for their taxation years ending after December 31, 2008. So there's a little more lead time for the tax filing, but there are some other initiatives that can come into play much earlier, and I'll speak about those in a moment or so.

The Ministry of Revenue, under the able leadership of Minister Chan, is working very closely with the Canada Revenue Agency at this point in time to make the

transition arrangements that will ensure a smooth transition. It's one of the key elements. We clearly don't want to see the business environment disrupted because the transition process doesn't work. I think that's one of the reasons that, at this particular time, it's so critically important that we have a Ministry of Revenue and a Minister of Revenue who understands the business community, who understands what it means to work and build business success. We have to ensure that we have that type of leadership so this transition will be seamless, so the transition will cause no hiccups, so the transition will be solely to the benefit of the businesses that we so dearly want to support.

At the same time as all those transitions are occurring, there will be other matters with respect to human resources which I'll comment on briefly in a moment or so.

Both Minister Chan and Minister Sorbara referenced, as I did, the memorandum of agreement that was structured in October 2006. That's intended to provide an opportunity for the delivery of early compliance gains for businesses. We don't have to wait until everything is finished. There are some earlier opportunities for some relatively immediate savings to the business community as we work through this.

These early compliance gains arise from activities that integrate provincial and federal tax administration prior to the single corporate tax administration. These activities would include integrated audits. We can begin bringing those audit structures together under one auspice. That helps the smoothing of the transitional phase. It involves matters around objections and appeals as part of that audit process, various rulings and interpretations that will be done by one body, not being duplicated, the two bodies not necessarily having to consult in the same way they might otherwise have to if there were appeal processes. It will begin moving the jurisdictional activity into one area, with the consultation still necessary but to a much lesser degree as we smooth it and get the right rules in place.

We'll also begin to focus taxpayer inquiries. They'll know whom to go talk to. They'll know that they need to talk to the CRA, not to the CRA and the Ministry of Revenue and the Ministry of Finance. They'll be able to focus their attention somewhat, as taxpayers, as businesses, on getting the approach to government that they need as effectively as possible. It's one-window shopping for government. We talk a lot about one-window opportunities, one-window shopping. For corporate tax collection, I think it's really critically important if we have the opportunity to have a one-window shop.

In the consultations that led up to this memorandum of agreement last October, the business community broadly made it clear that they wanted to start realizing those savings as quickly as possible. They don't want to wait for those an indeterminate amount of time. Our government, Minister Chan, would like nothing more, I think, than to see Ontario businesses take advantage of these savings as quickly as possible. That's part of the urgency

about this legislation. It can't be why it's left to slide. It can't be seen to be less important because it's more administrative than some other matters that might be of a little broader public interest, because they grab public attention. Sometimes corporate tax doesn't grab the public's attention. It's not something they stay up at night for unless they have insomnia, and that usually cures it.

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If enacted, the bill will provide for a much more simplified process and harmonized rules following the start of the actual corporate tax administration process. For those taxation years ending before the start of the federal administration, we intend to provide for integrated activities as soon as possible after the human resources agreement and business transition agreement are finalized. Legislation to enable early compliance-saving measures was already passed in 2006. That was the earlier legislation. So it's allowing us to do some of those things early on.

I want to talk a little bit about human resource and transition matters. It does get down to some concerns that are obviously expressed in the process about those who work in the environment, those who work in government. They need to know that we have their interests first in mind as well. The minister mentioned early on that Bill 174 provides for a transition period for business. The memorandum of agreement acknowledges that we have skills and expertise here in the OPS—the Ontario public service—that we want to bring to the CRA. We want to ensure that those skills that we have readily available within the province of Ontario, within the Ontario public service, are valued skills that will be valued within the CRA.

The lead negotiators—and these things always take a degree of negotiation. It's not a straight up: "Make a phone call, Minister Sorbara, talk to Minister Flaherty, 'Oh, yeah, this is a good thing. Let's just get her done,' and sign on the dotted line." There's a whole lot of work that has to go on as part of it. That means those who negotiate between the two levels of government both having significant roles in negotiating on behalf of the business community to get it right. Those negotiators from both CRA and the province have been meeting regularly since last November. Once the MOU was in place, the hard slugging really began. Both of the organizations—the CRA and our own ministries—are very optimistic that the human resources agreement can be concluded this spring. So that window is closing to complete that work. I know the minister has that well in hand from our end and I'm expecting that he will nod accordingly that this spring is still a deliverable time frame for the human resources agreement so that staff are protected in this process and their skills will continue to be well used, with opportunities for professional growth continuing.

Once concluded, this particular agreement will include details on the terms and conditions of employment for Ministry of Revenue staff who will transition over to the Canada Revenue Agency. So there is a real activity going

on as well. It's not just a paper exercise that we're into; this is a real activity regarding professionals who have chosen careers with the Ontario public service, with the Ministry of Revenue or the Ministry of Finance, and some of those will be transitioning over to a new enterprise, to a new government structure. We want to ensure that when that occurs, the terms and conditions of employment for that transition are in the interests of the employees who are making that transition, and ensure that they remain whole in that process. We know that they will be. We know that as part of that negotiation, we're getting constant input from them so there is no loss on their part whatsoever. That couldn't occur; we wouldn't allow it to occur.

The full impact on Ontario's corporate tax staff won't be known until the agreement is negotiated fully. That's ongoing, optimistically to be concluded this spring. However, the ministry's priority is to continue to meet, as I say, all of its obligations. Our employees are our first consideration in this process.

The ministry is committed to negotiating the very best—let me repeat that: the very best—human resources agreement possible. We're going to continue to work with the federal government and the bargaining agents, which are an important part of this, to ensure a smooth transition. There are a lot of players. The federal government is a player, we're a player, the staff are paramount in this, and the bargaining agents on behalf of those staff are an important part of this to make sure that as this occurs we're doing what's right for the OPS staff who will transition to CRA.

The ministry and the CRA are also working in a partnership to finalize the overall transition-of-function agreement. The agreement will outline the details of the transfer of the corporate tax administration to the federal government. That's a big part of what Minister Chan has on his plate right now with a high degree of urgency. He's going to be very busy the next number of months, if we work through this in this Legislature. I'm optimistic that the Legislature is ultimately going to see the wisdom of supporting this bill, but it's going to mean that he's going to be very busy here in the Legislature as we debate the bill, as we've seen him on so many occasions, hearing from the opposition and our own members about both support and concerns they may have to ensure that we get it right. As we work through the committee process, I look forward to being here to support him as Minister Sorbara's parliamentary assistant. But I look forward to supporting Minister Chan to the best of my ability on his bill as we work through this and certainly as it comes to conclusion in the Legislature.

Once that's done, the hard work is still ahead. The minister still has that important oversight to make sure that we get the transition right, to make sure it's an effective strategy, to make sure that the human resource that I was talking about in the context of the agreement—to make sure that we protect those staff so when they transition over they transition into an effective organization, hopefully a more effective organization as a single

tax collection structure agency, and it becomes to their benefit that at the end of the day they see not only a lateral move but a move that is ultimately something they want to be a part of as it will enhance business activity.

The Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act, 2006, takes great strides in creating an enhanced business environment here in the province of Ontario. Bill 174 will help to streamline the tax system. It's going to save businesses time and it's going to save businesses money, and that means they have more to invest in time and energy and, ideally, financially in their businesses to build the economy here in Ontario. It's great news for Ontario's businesses.

It's also a great example of what happens when governments work together. I started talking about that right at the very beginning, and I want to conclude almost with that. Governments working together can do such great things. It doesn't matter whether it's in this instance, where the federal and provincial governments have found an area where through co-operation business wins, the economy wins. But it sets the stage for other opportunities for the senior levels, the upper-tier levels, the upper-order levels of government to work together.

Coming from a municipal background like you, Mr. Speaker, occasionally we talk about "upper" and "lower." You and I know from our past experience that we like to think of orders of government on level playing fields that negotiate opportunities on behalf of their citizens. I think we have great opportunities, some of which we've been pursuing, in all orders of government to work together. In this instance, it's appropriate that the federal and provincial governments work together. It's their jurisdictional responsibility.

But we're doing a lot of things in the province currently with the broader public sector. There's a lot of work going on with buy Ontario. Opportunities exist there for municipal and provincial governments to realize a scale of buying, in some instances a regionalization of buying, that's to the benefit of taxpayers in the end. It shows the great things that governments can do when they work together, whether it's federal, provincial or municipal governments that choose to find a means of a co-operative effort and a co-operative agenda.

Among those kinds of things, we tend to forget about the successes that have occurred over the years. I recall the early agreements with former federal governments and provincial governments on infrastructure programs. The FCM—the Federation of Canadian Municipalities—has pushed for so long to get infrastructure money. It was the federal government, I recall, at the time that really championed that cause. Then, with the support of the provincial government as well drawn into it, we were able to do some great things. We continue to do a lot of that in tri-party relationships. This is yet another opportunity for governments to work together to the benefit of Ontarians as a whole.

We want to ensure that our government can provide an enhanced business climate—not just a good business climate but an enhanced business climate. This is one

great opportunity for us, a great opportunity on behalf of Ontarians to see governments work together to enhance business opportunities and to show them that as governments we can get things done, we can get it right, we can get it done efficiently and we can get it done in their interest.

I'd certainly urge the honourable members of the Legislature, as we work through this debate, to consider their comments seriously, how they can assist in enhancing this bill through the comments they make as we review and ensure that we have it exactly right. I hope at the end of the day that they'll see the wisdom in supporting this legislation so that we can move on with the harmonization of the corporate tax structure between the federal government and the province of Ontario.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I was going to comment on the new Minister of Revenue and—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): You should.

Mr. Chudleigh: Well, it was his maiden speech, so I wouldn't want to say anything untoward. I was going to comment on the fact that he got elected and had to wait three weeks to get into cabinet. I know members in the back benches have been waiting three and a half years, seven years, 12 years, 15 years in some cases. I know that you're very happy for Mr. Chan, the Minister of Revenue, and his good fortune—

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): How long have you been waiting?

Mr. Chudleigh: It's my experience, member from Leamington, that you can wait a long time. Of course, you all behave yourselves—

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: Yes, I do—and you play the party line. You be good little boys and you wait and you wait and you wait. However, this minister didn't have to wait. That's nice. I'm pleased for his good fortune.

I'm going to be speaking to the bill shortly. I have a huge document that talks about each and every element, every paragraph within this bill. I'm sure that the members of the Legislature and those at home will have rapt attention as I go through the minute detail of this bill—

Interjection: Riveting.

Mr. Chudleigh: It will be riveting, the minute detail of this bill—and explain to the people of Ontario how this bill is actually a pretty good piece of legislation that is sort of out of character for this government. We can kind of support this piece of legislation, even though it creates bureaucracy, creating a Minister of Revenue when that hasn't been in effect in Ontario for over 14 years. None other than Bob Rae did away with that position as being redundant. However, this government has brought it back.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I look forward to speaking on this bill as well. I was a small business owner, a successful one. I enjoyed that privilege for many years. Certainly, as the critic for small business

for the New Democratic Party, I'm interested in talking about some of the aspects of this bill.

Now, of course, the New Democratic Party is in favour of simplifying the taxation process for small business, but we do have serious concerns. We don't only have serious concerns but our constituents in the small business community have, and I hope to speak about those. The Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas has some real concerns about their taxation in this province. I just bring the Speaker's attention and theirs to a motion that I tabled some time back in December on their behalf: "That, in the opinion of this House, the property tax rate levied by the province on small business should be applied more equitably across the province, and the tax rate for small business should be set at the same rate for the entire GTA, and that level of taxation should be frozen. To mitigate municipal costs, an uploading of the downloaded cost for social programs (excluding education) should be assumed by the province on a phased-in basis over 10 years."

What we got in the major budget that this government delivered was talk about this but no action—no action for years and years. That received its appropriate reaction from the small business community, who said that this provincial government taxes Toronto's commercial property to the hilt and that this budget has let them down. So I certainly look forward to saying something about this bill but also what should have been in this bill, what could have been in this bill, because that is equally important. There should have been a lot in this bill addressing the needs of small business and there could have been a lot in this bill addressing the needs of small business—and there is not. If this is directed to the needs of small business, it hasn't done the job it needs to do. I look forward to talking about that and also concerns of some other stakeholders.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): We have a great tradition in this House. I'm a relatively new member, just in this term. I want to thank the member for Halton because he understands that tradition, that when someone gives their inaugural address—what we refer to as a maiden speech—they welcome them because they talk about their family, about their riding, about why they're proud. I want to say to the new member from Markham, I know that your father is very, very proud of you for all that you've accomplished since you've come to this country. I know that the good people of Markham are proud of you as well. I remember going door to door for you. You were a grand candidate—in a very cold part of the year, I might add. I didn't realize Markham could be that chilly, but it was.

So I say to the other members, particularly those who perhaps just spoke who are also new members, that we should remember that wonderful tradition that we do welcome those members who get up for the first time to talk about their riding and their families. That would be the right thing to do, I think.

Now, on this bill, I want to commend my colleague. I think we're correct by having Minister Chan—he and I

come from the same business background, I might add. What I was saying is that as someone who is, as a certified financial planner, for many years dealing on a daily basis with my clients and their taxes—the duplicity, the bureaucracy that you have to fill those two sets of papers and those little, little differences between the federal regulations and the provincial regulations would bedevil anyone.

The important thing to remember is that those inconsistencies cost people money. The money that goes for this needless bureaucracy is not earned as profit upon which people pay taxes and it's not reinvested in our economy. So I think this is a wonderful bill for all.

Again, welcome to the new member for Markham. I hope all parties would join in welcoming him to this House.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I join in the compliments being paid to the Minister of Revenue on the occasion of his, I shall call it, inaugural speech, to avoid any sexist undertones—not overtones; undertones—to the reference to it traditionally as a maiden speech. We'll call it the inaugural speech. I say he acquitted himself well. I mentioned to him, no matter what you did before you came here, when you stand up for the first time, it's a new experience. It's a novel place. You're not necessarily among friends when you do speak, and it's challenging.

So I've enjoyed listening to the Minister of Revenue. He is Michael Chan, of course, from Markham—also among the most newly elected members of this assembly. That was a remarkable by-election, wasn't it? We had Ms. Savoline from Burlington elected, we had Paul Ferreira from York South-Weston elected and we had Michael Chan from Markham elected. There we are; in four months' time, five months' time—how many months' time?—we're going to have a provincial election. Who knows how the seating plan is going to be readjusted? Who knows? All we know is that the voters are never wrong. However regretful we may feel after an election, we have to know that the voters are never wrong.

I'm looking forward to hearing the first speaker from the official opposition, because I anticipate that his comments will bring with them a ringing denunciation of this government. When the speaker for the Tories stands in his place, we will perhaps reflect on the chimes of freedom that Ontarians truly look forward to.

The Acting Speaker: Either the Minister of Revenue or the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge may respond.

Hon. Mr. Chan: I would like to thank my colleagues from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, from Halton, Parkdale-High Park, Perth-Middlesex and Niagara Centre for the comments. Thank you actually for crossing the floor and shaking my hand and giving me a couple of comments, or lessons, which I really appreciate.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Chan: I said I appreciate it, but I haven't said that I'm going to follow it.

The bottom line of the bill is actually, I think, to save anxiety. My colleague mentioned about how one collector is already one more than enough. We don't have any collectors other than two, so it would release a lot of pressure for the business world.

It's common sense: When you make one filing, a single corporate tax, it's got to be better than filing two times or reporting to two people. So this is really common sense. It reduces duplication, saves money—these are all good things. These are all good for Ontarians. It's good for the small and medium-sized businesses. When it's good for them and they save money, they're able to spend more time being more competitive and fostering a stronger economy. So I think that when this bill passes, it will eventually do a lot of good for the small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario. I look forward to the bill passing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Chudleigh: I promised to give a detailed account of this bill, but it's obvious that—the opposition's job in this House is to hold the government to account. Perhaps the most important holding to account that can happen is when it surrounds Ontario taxpayers' dollars.

The opposition is being verbose about this—

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: You're the opposition.

Mr. Chudleigh: The government. I got a little ahead of myself; I was thinking of after October.

There are millions of tax dollars that have gone missing in the province of Ontario. There is no accounting for the process; there is no accounting for the follow-up; there is no accounting for anything. In fact, the money could be going anywhere. It could be going into people's pockets; it could be going into the financing of Liberal campaigns, such as happened in Adscam. I mean, the Gomery report was supposed to be a report on that event, not a learning process for this party. It's absolutely terrible, the way this government is conducting itself. We have tried through numerous means to bring this government to account. We've asked them in question period; we've never received good answers. We've asked them in committee to bring the auditor in. We've tried to force the auditor to take this process in, and we were voted down by the majority. So I'm very pleased to try to bring this government to account by moving adjournment of this debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Halton has moved adjournment of the debate.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There being more than five members, please call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1703 to 1733.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Please be seated.

All those opposed will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Further debate.

Mr. Chudleigh: In the interim, the government has not brought any satisfaction to the members of the opposition, so I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1735 to 1805.

The Acting Speaker: Would members please take their seats. Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will please rise to be recorded.

Please be seated.

All those opposed will please rise.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 7; the nays are 38.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being well after 6 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1806.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerk-at-the-Table / Greffier parlementaire: Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
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Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
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Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Etobicoke Centre Etobicoke-Centre	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North Etobicoke-Nord	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation ministre des Transports	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (Ind.)
Etobicoke Lakeshore	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Glengarry - Prescott - Russell	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean-Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Guelph-Wellington	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)

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Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Willowdale	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Munro, Julia (PC)
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Ferreira, Paul (ND)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakubski, John (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Sergio, Mario (L)
Samia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	York North / York-Nord	
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Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 38^e législature

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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
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Wednesday 2 May 2007

Mercredi 2 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 mai 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 218, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Thunder Bay—Superior North—Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Speaker, thank you very much. I was in the supper room when you were opening the bottle of red wine and—

The Deputy Speaker: That's out of order.

Mr. Mauro: The only thing that was out of order is that you split the cork when you opened the bottle. That's what was out of order.

I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill today. I'll be sharing my time with the member from London—Fanshawe.

It was a very enjoyable supper hour, actually, Mr. Speaker. We all enjoyed it. And if my speech is a little slower, it will be because I—

Interjection.

Mr. Mauro: Yeah, very tacky. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Halton, come to order.

Mr. Mauro: We're pleased to rise to speak on Bill 218, modernizing Ontario's elections, certainly a piece of legislation that has received a lot of broad-based support across the province. Many different groups have expressed their interest, not just since we formed government, but I think this is something whose time has come. People have been looking for something like this for quite some time. We're very pleased as a government that we have brought this forward; we're very pleased

that the citizens' assembly that we have formed has done its work, that the minister has engaged that group in a broad-based process. We're very happy that this work has brought forward an opportunity for people to move forward with some potential electoral reform as we move into the 2007 October election.

I know that one of the reasons people in Ontario—and in a lot of other provinces, I think, and perhaps other countries as well—have thought it was necessary to bring forward electoral reform is that we have seen increasingly lower voter turnouts at all levels of government: municipal, provincial, federal. And provincially not just in the province of Ontario; I think in most provinces. While some countries have shown increasing voter participation, Ontario's numbers have not been great, have been stagnating, in fact sometimes declining. Some people view voter turnout as one of the main reasons for requiring some sort of electoral reform to try to engage the electorate in a broader way to hopefully see those numbers increase so there will be more people engaged. Some have even talked about penalizing people if they're not interested in voting, if they don't come and vote.

I've always found that piece of it at odds with my way of thinking. I'm not interested in penalizing people if they don't vote. I don't want to put a monetary penalty on people to force them to vote. If people are not engaged currently in the voting process, I don't think we need to force them to do that. I don't want to see that happen. We want to engage people. We want them to be educated. We want them to be part of the process. And if they are then willing and able to go forward and vote, I think under those circumstances it's much better to have them participating that way than by forcing them through a monetary penalty to do that. I think it's Australia or New Zealand, or both, who have placed a monetary penalty on the electorate for those who do not vote. I don't know the history of Australia and New Zealand and why they have chosen to go down that path, but clearly it's not something that I favour.

1850

In terms of why we've come to this point, though, I must say, as a first-time member, that I think one of the reasons, perhaps, that participation in provincial elections, federal elections, municipal elections is declining or stagnating is less about people's busy lives but has more to do with the way that people in these chambers treat each other. That happens just to be my personal opinion. There are lots of reasons as to why we think people are voting in smaller numbers than they used to

five years ago, 10 years ago, 25 years ago. We all know the old jokes. If you run polling numbers on lawyers and doctors and politicians on how we all stack up in terms of respect in the eyes of the public, I have one little personal theory that it has to do more with the way we treat each other in this institution than perhaps any of those other things.

I understand that as elections get closer, the tone of the place changes. I understand that the stakes are high. And I suppose what goes on should not necessarily surprise any of us. But I can tell you that as somebody who's been here for three and a half years now during my first term, I am no longer surprised by the goings-on in this Legislature, but nevertheless on more than a regular occasion am disappointed by the goings-on in here. I think that when we expect members of the public to stay engaged in a political process, to respect the process, to feel that their vote matters and that their issues are well represented in the Legislature, if they see the members of the assembly not respecting each other, I'm not sure how it would make sense that we would expect them to respect the process and then be fully engaged. I just don't see it happening.

I think what's gone on here for the last four or five weeks is perhaps the best example of why people in all of our ridings in the province sometimes might get turned off. Opposition parties obviously feel like they're getting some traction out of their line of questioning for the last five or six weeks. I'm not sure that's the case. Call it what you want; everybody's looking for election issues as we get nearer to the election. They feel like what they're doing has some merit. I think both ministers who have been the subject of most of the questioning for the last four or five weeks have stood up and answered the questions as best as they can. I think they've done a very good job of showing the position of our party on these issues. And I can tell you very frankly, on the way that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has answered, we know that it is consistent with past practices. And yet those who stand up and ask those questions ask them as if this has never happened before. The minister clearly has not done anything untoward, and yet we see this questioning going on as members of the opposition try to find traction on an issue as we launch into an election.

I can tell you that, like most members in this place—we all do our work back in our constituencies. We all are at community events on a regular basis. We're all in the coffee shops. We all get the phone calls and the e-mails. This issue is not resonating in my community. I've talked to members of the opposition parties, actually, off the record who tell me that it's not necessarily resonating to any great degree in theirs. But I only use it as an example of where I think we have gone off track somewhere along the line in this Legislature and perhaps in others, and not only municipally. I had an experience of being a member of Thunder Bay city council for six years. My first three years I now refer to as the honeymoon, and the second three years as the trial by fire, where we had two very

different groups of councillors. The first group—although I didn't know how good I had it—got along well. There was pretty much a collegial and a team atmosphere as we moved forward in trying to advance the needs of the people we represented. The second group was very different. I don't criticize them, but I can just say that that group was very different, and the work that was able to get done during that time was minimal. We did not advance the needs of the community very well in those three years. The point I'm making, I guess, is that it's not only at the provincial level where we see these things occurring. It can be just as challenging sometimes to move issues forward at the municipal level.

Certainly what this place does for you as a first-time member is to show you how political people can be and how political even the most simple of issues can be made to be when people are looking to gain traction on issues. I'm not necessarily sure that it's a good thing. I'm not necessarily sure that we are fooling anybody. I often wonder, as I sit around this place, how it would be if the cameras were not here. I had the experience during my time on city council in Thunder Bay where halfway through my six years we brought in the cameras and televised 100% of the meetings instead of 50% of the meetings. Almost overnight you saw the attitudes and the habits of some of the members switch almost like a light switch. Things changed dramatically. I'm not suggesting for a second that we should remove the cameras from this Legislature; clearly that is not going to happen. Clearly it's not something I would advocate for; they're here. But I think we all wonder openly and loudly as to the effect of television on the goings-on in this Legislature and how that medium is sometimes used, and probably more rightly and accurately to say abused, by people as we try and sometimes get what I think is the incorrect messaging out to the people who send us here.

Election reform is deemed to be necessary by a lot of people in this province. I wonder how we've arrived here. I'm not sure we have arrived here for the reasons that people think we have. I think, quite frankly, that to a large degree we have arrived here requiring electoral reform because people in these Legislative Assemblies sometimes don't treat each other with the respect that we should and it has led to, I think, a reduction of respect in the eyes of the electorate. Probably we may be more responsible for turning them off the electoral process than anything else.

Thank you, Speaker. I now pass my time over to the other member.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): First, I want to thank my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for sharing the time with me, giving me the time to speak about a very important subject and a very important issue.

My colleague spoke in detail about the importance of participating in elections and also about the time and how we can modernize the election system which we have in

the province of Ontario. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the turnout at voting time is very low year after year in the many different levels of government, whether municipal or provincial or federal. That's why we have to be creative in order to create a way, a mechanism, to engage people more in the elections.

I go very often to citizenship court when they give citizenship cards to new Canadians. Most of the time, I participate and I listen to the judge when he talks about Canada or the pillars of being Canadian. It's very important. He mentions that we have three pillars: The first one is to be loyal to the land; the second one is to observe the laws of the land; and the third one is your duties and obligations. It's your duty as a citizen to vote and to participate in the community and civic life and be a full Canadian, give back to the community that accepted you as a citizen of this land. The judge often reminds people about the importance of elections and the importance of people participating in choosing the municipal, provincial and federal governments. I think it's our responsibility as citizens to be able to select the government that's going to represent us in the future; that's going to represent us at city hall, provincially or federally.

All the studies around the subject show that our numbers are very low year after year. There are so many different issues, so many different reasons, but the most important thing is that people think the system we have doesn't reflect and satisfy their needs and doesn't give them the chance to participate.

I've been in many different countries, and I studied different electoral systems and many different democratic systems in many different nations. We are privileged in this province and in this country to have a democratic system that allows people to vote and participate in choosing their representative at any level, something many different nations don't have. So many different citizens around the globe don't have that chance to stand up and vote for the people they want. They have a dictatorship government. The army government forces their will on them, doesn't allow them to vote or choose their representative and appoints whoever they want without any democracy, without any procedures.

We have in this nation that chance, as citizens, every four years or whatever time, to go to vote and select the people we want. So the most important thing is how we can get all the people engaged in the system and give them some kind of—attract them to come and cast their vote when the election happens. This is very important because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the turnout, especially among youth, is very low. Among some people, the newcomers, it's very low because very often they think this government or this system doesn't represent their views. So I think that changing the system might help many people to participate and vote to select a government. So the citizens' assembly, which is chosen by the minister or the ministry in order to participate across the province of Ontario, brings together many different levels of aging and students and citizens to give us an idea. I think the committee travelled to many different countries

to study the electoral system in many different nations. They came up with enough, I guess, advice to help us construct a bill; it might help us to create new directions and attract more people to participate in elections.

1900

My colleague was saying a few minutes ago that in many different nations, in order to increase participation in elections, they charge some kind of levy or penalize people who don't participate in elections. Very often we hear people on the street saying: "I don't like this government. I don't like this member. I don't like this. I don't like that." We discovered that, most of the time, those people who are complaining don't participate in elections. They don't vote. If you don't vote, I guess you have no right to criticize.

If you have some kind of complaint or criticism, I think you should, when the election comes, cast your vote to support the person who's going to support your view, give you full representation. This is what we need in this province. We need a system that would, hopefully, engage all citizens, from different levels of aging, to participate in elections, create some kind of attraction for those people to come and vote.

As my colleague mentioned—Dave Levac, the whip of our party—in Australia they have a fee of \$75 if you don't participate in elections. One day I was knocking on doors and talking to people who said, "We are disgusted, because so many people complain but don't vote. Why doesn't the government bring a fee?" I'm giving you an idea, not part of this bill, but some people are saying: "Maybe a fee, if you penalize people if they don't vote and exercise their right; they should pay some kind of fee. You, as a citizen, have an obligation to go and cast your vote and choose the government or choose the person who will represent you in any level of government. So why are you dropping your right?"

This is very important for all of us. That's why most of the time we elect the government and the citizens in a different way. So, different directions—how we can have engagement from both sides, representatives whom we elect and send to the municipal, provincial or federal level, who engage all the time with their constituents and reflect their needs, their views and ideologies. It's very important to have a way to have a prosperous province in order to have some kind of citizenship loyalty to the land, create that feeling among the population. That person represents you at Queen's Park or municipally or federally, represents your views. If he does not, when the election comes, you go and change him. Vote against him. Change to a person you think will represent your views. That's why it's important to create some kind of engagement mechanism to help the people who make the rules and laws be able to be reflections of the citizens of the province.

I want to congratulate the minister and the minister's staff, who have been working hard to bring forward such an important bill to engage the citizens of the province of Ontario and give us enough ideas, give us enough directions, because very often we haven't got enough ideas

about what's going on on the street or what's happening there. Total engagement, daily engagement, from the citizens of the province of Ontario, whether from the north, from the east, from the west, from the cities, from the rural areas, from the farming communities—we have to have reflections of those people in this place. This will only happen by creating a system, a democratic system, engaging all the people to participate and send their representatives to this place so that when we have bills or rules or a budget, when we have any issue concerning the province of Ontario, we have people from every corner of the province to represent their views and be advocates on behalf of them. I'd like to be able to represent the whole province of Ontario, but I don't have enough knowledge about the north, as my friend the minister of northern Ontario does, Minister Bartolucci, who is from the north, represents the area of the north. He'll bring a different perspective to the table than I will. My friend the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, most of his community is a rural community, so he has the ability to bring more and different views than—

Interjection.

Mr. Ramal: I'm sorry?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): If you don't know enough about the north, go to the north.

Mr. Ramal: That's why this is called the House of the people: to represent all the people from the whole province. That's why we have 103 seats. Those seats represent many different parts of the province, and everyone has different issues, a different view, different perspectives concerning the way they want the province to be run or the direction of the province. That's why we have an election every four years. But this time is unique because the citizens of Ontario are going to vote with a different mandate: to choose an electoral system to reflect their views. If they're happy with it, they can maintain it. I believe in the democratic process. If the majority of the people want the same system to remain, that's fine; if people want to change it, we'll change it according to their will, because they voted democratically to change it. So this is very important to democracy. This is what we enjoy in this province; this is what we enjoy in this country. As I mentioned, not many people around the globe have the ability and the chance to participate in elections and to choose their government, their Prime Minister or their leader.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak in support of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan may have put his finger on the issue when he talked about the issue of respect and the lack of regard that perhaps members of this House feel for each other. I would extend that a little further and suggest that the government has a disastrous lack of respect for the taxpayers of Ontario. When you can take \$32 million of taxpayers' money in this province—that's a significant amount of money; the Minister of Finance refers to it as "a pittance," but it's a significant amount of

money—and shovel it out the door with no process, no forms, no follow-up, no respect at all for taxpayers' money, I would suggest that respect may very well be the issue, but it's the respect that this government has for the taxpayers of Ontario.

The similarities are startling between this issue and the Adscam that the Liberals in Ottawa suffered a number of years ago: \$300 million, 10% of which you're talking about here. That caused a huge upheaval down there. People have gone to jail. You can run and hide on this issue, but eventually, sometime, the Auditor General of Ontario is going to look at this issue. He is going to review it. He may not review it before the next election. You've got a majority and you can probably block our efforts in that area, but he's going to review it at some point in time. If that money can't be accounted for, there are people who perhaps are sitting in this House—perhaps they're not; perhaps they were the receivers of the money—who are going to be called to account for that money. Our system provides for that. You should understand that. All of you should understand that very clearly. This is going to come to a conclusion sometime, and somebody is going to be held responsible.

1910

Mr. Kormos: I'm just concerned about the incredible hostility that's coming from government backbenchers. There's heckling, interruptions, interjections, and language, quite frankly, that doesn't lend itself to civil discourse.

I'm eager, of course, once the 10 minutes of questions and comments are spoken to, to hear the speaker from the Conservative caucus address this bill, because I suspect that the speech from that member will leave people's ears ringing in this chamber and indeed beyond. I suspect that the government will get dinged more than once during the course of the comments that are going to come in short order from the spokesperson for the official opposition.

The New Democratic Party critic for democratic reform, of course, our member for Beaches–East York, Mr. Prue, has an incredible amount to say about this bill.

But really, when it comes down to it, when you're talking about democratic reform, shouldn't we be talking about the government's failure to call on the Auditor General to shed some light on the millions and millions of dollars that were shovelled by the government to groups, regrettably bad as well as good—many valid groups. But the problem is that there was no application process, there was no accountability. And now we've got a government that stonewalls, that wants to bury the issue under bafflegab. Not only are opposition members frustrated, angry, concerned; the people out there are too. Quite frankly, Ontarians want to see the Auditor General called in to take a look at what happened. If the government has nothing to be afraid of, get the Auditor General in here.

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): It's a pleasure to respond to the comments from the members for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and London–Fanshawe.

The whole intent of this bill is about modernizing Ontario's elections. It's going to do a number of things. One, it's going to make it easier to vote. Therefore, we're going to extend polling hours by adding an additional hour at the end of polling day, increase the number of advance poll days from six to 13, and establish additional accessibility criteria for selecting polling locations. Now, that may not seem important to the opposition, but it is important, because it will encourage more people to get out and vote.

The next one to talk about is that the Chief Electoral Officer is going to be granted authority to undertake public education on this whole new system that the citizens' assembly has decided upon.

It's also about ensuring that when people go to vote, they are the people they say they are. So this legislation, if passed, is going to improve election integrity.

I know that there are unfortunate theatrics sometimes in the chamber, and that's been going on for as long as the Legislature has been here, and now that it is televised I think the theatrics tend to be heightened a little bit. I believe sometimes some members in particular enjoy the theatrics because they know that they're on television. But what's important at the end of the day is that good work is getting done and that we are modernizing Ontario's elections.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know whether I would get this opportunity, but I thank my colleagues from the Progressive Conservative Party for not seizing this opportunity.

I listened to my two colleagues, the one from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the one from London–Fanshawe, and I was hoping to hear some pearls of wisdom, some real, solid debate on the content of the bill. Although they occupied the full 20 minutes, I didn't hear one single aspect of the bill discussed, neither enumeration nor anything to do with alternative voting methods, the rights of the CEO—all of the things contained in the bill. We heard from them about how things took place in this House and how there was rancour sometimes and a little bit of bitterness. We heard from the other one a discussion which I'm sure would fit in any grade 9 civics class about the people's right to vote. But there was nothing in there that actually talked to contents of the bill.

There was one amazing discussion. The member from London–Fanshawe talked about what he would maybe not hope to see in the bill but could be considered, and that is forcing people to vote and fining them if they don't. I only know of two countries on the face of this planet that do that. Both have pretty high voter turnout, as one might expect, but there is a fair amount of cynicism that goes along with it in both of those places, one being Australia and the other being Greece. I'm not really—

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Greece changed it just recently.

Mr. Prue: Greece changed it recently. So there it is, even then. There is one left. I have just heard that Greece changed it, but up until a few years ago, Greece had that too. I was in Greece once during an election and there were a lot of people, of course, celebrating and happy with the Greek elections, but there were a lot of people who didn't want to be bothered but were forced to do so anyway. I'm not sure that was the best thing for democracy.

So although I welcome their contribution, I have to tell you there wasn't much of a contribution made by these two members.

The Deputy Speaker: Response? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: Thanks to all the members who commented on my speech: the members from Halton, Niagara Centre, Beaches–East York and my colleague the Minister of Culture.

I know the member from Beaches–East York wants to talk about different issues, but we want to talk about the importance of the bill, and I want to thank the minister for bringing it forward, because it's very important for engaging people and attracting people to vote.

It's our duty as citizens to participate in elections and select the people who are going to represent us at any level of government.

I want to tell the member from Beaches–East York that what I was talking about is very important: the whole idea, the whole debate, about how we can encourage people to vote in big numbers. We want to see democracy taking place with the biggest percentage, not a small portion of people who come to select a certain government. That is the point of the bill, basically, as I mentioned: to encourage people to vote in any way.

When I threw out the idea about penalties, it was just an idea. It's not part of the bill. I was just giving an example, because many people are looking for greater participation, especially from our youngsters. Young people, for some reason, don't want to participate in elections.

It was funny, I was at one of the events one time, and a professor from Western Ontario was studying why people don't go to vote in big numbers. He said that maybe it's not a big issue. He was saying that we need another Woodstock—the hippie movement, the happy movement, peace and love. He thought we needed something similar to engage people in government and select government.

That's why our government and our minister are looking for greater engagement in the democratic process.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ramal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to introduce the mayor of the town of Richmond Hill, Dave Barrow, his wife and the town's chief of police. They're sitting in the gallery.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Chudleigh: This bill, Bill 218—

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: Oh, sorry. I'll ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead. Our party critic, Mr. Sterling, isn't available this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Chudleigh: I appreciate the Liberal whip's straightening me out on that. Thank you.

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: There's Christmas in the air.

This particular bill is an interesting one in that it comes at the last minute. The Chief Election Officer ruled on this and presented his report back in September of 2004. That's two and a half years ago, yet here it is slight weeks before the House adjourns and just a matter of months before the next election, and all of a sudden the government has found its religion.

This is a fairly complicated act. It changes 10 different acts, and combined with the changes to the party registration system, which were sneaked through in the budget through a time allocation motion, there's a significant change to it. It isn't just changing the dates of the opening and closing of polls, which is probably the one that most Ontarians will be aware of, but it just hasn't had the light of day shone on it that it should have had.

Speaking of the light of day, we would think that over the course of the supper hour, the dinner hour, the government would approach the opposition parties and ask if there wasn't some way we could discuss the issue of this slush fund that has been flushing the taxpayers' dollars out the door of the government and perhaps we could come to some conclusion as to how this could be handled and how the light of day could be shone on this particular issue, but that discussion hasn't taken place. The government is unwilling to speak about this or to find some solution to this, so I think the continuation of this debate is superfluous when the issue of the day is not even being discussed. So I would, with respect, move adjournment of debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1920 to 1950.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 6; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Chudleigh: It grieves me to report that there has been no progress made on enlightening the people of Ontario. I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1952 to 2022.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 6; the nays are 24.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Further debate?

Mr. Prue: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Are there not questions and comments? He had such brilliant things to say.

The Deputy Speaker: That's a good question. On second thought, yes, we'll have questions and comments.

The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: It's a pleasure to rise and speak about the comments made by the member from Halton. I think never before have I heard such enlightened comments. I think never before have I heard him wax so eloquently for so few minutes and say so much.

The reality of what he had to say, though, has struck a nerve, and it really struck a nerve with me when I looked down at the tie that I'm wearing tonight, because I woke up this morning and was trying to decide on the most appropriate tie, and of course I looked down and I saw this tie of South Park, and I thought, you know, I'd like to go in and murder little Kenny or something—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: Oh, no, it's only fun. It's only fun, if you ever watch the TV show.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No, no, that's not the reason. It's just that I needed to wear a red tie to show with a blue suit.

But I had a tie in my hand that I should have worn. I have a tie, of course, of Vincent Van Gogh's self-portrait. Suffering very badly from tinnitus, the poor man had cut off his ear. And with all of the bells that were ringing here tonight, I think that would have been far and away the most appropriate tie. Perhaps I'll get an opportunity to wear it tomorrow, although I don't imagine we will be suffering the same tinnitus in our ears—although there is a possibility. I think it will be an appropriate tie for the weeks ahead here in the Legislature.

Having said that, the member did make some good points about the reason the bells were ringing: because he believes—and I think most of the members of the opposition and, secretly, deep within their souls, probably even most of the members of the government—that the Premier and his cabinet have not been forthcoming on a wide number of issues, most recently on the issues involving what has come to be known as the slush fund or Colleague. I commend the member for having the

fortitude to take the action he has taken here tonight and for his brief and limited but good speech.

Mr. Kormos: I too have been here throughout the period of time when the member for Halton had the floor. I anticipated much of what was contained in his message to the government, and it was the desperation, fear, apprehension, but, more significantly, disappointment, anger and disgust with a government that has on its hands a scandalous scenario of millions of dollars being shovelled out the back door with no accountability whatsoever. The modest request by opposition members has been for the minister or the Premier—through you, Speaker; I say this to you. The modest proposal has been for the Premier or this minister to call upon the Auditor General to examine the books.

If the government has clean hands, if the minister has clean hands, if the government has nothing to fear, if things are as the minister says, you'd think he'd want the Auditor General to confirm that not just to people in this chamber but to all of Ontario. One would have thought that if indeed there were clean hands here, it would have been the minister, at the first opportunity, who would have been calling for the Auditor General to examine the materials and report back to the people of Ontario. That clearly isn't what happened. Shame on the government.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Member for Halton, you have two minutes in response.

Mr. Chudleigh: I'd like to thank the member for Beaches–East York for his kind comments about my non-speech, and also the member for Thorold. It's interesting. Machiavelli used to say, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." I think we say in today's jargon, "Politics makes strange bedfellows." I can remember sitting over there and railing against the NDP, as they railed against us. However, the NDP and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario stand united when we're protecting the taxpayers' dollars of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Further debate? The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Nice blue suit.

Mr. Prue: Nice blue suit. There you go. Nice tie, eh? All right.

If I might, Mr. Speaker, just as a little aside, I think I shocked some of the members, but obviously you're not great fans of South Park, because if you were, you would know that in every episode, although Kenny was often killed, he always came back to life in the next one, like most cartoon characters. Anyway, just so that anyone doesn't go away and feel that anything untoward was happening in my head process as I chose ties in the morning.

Mr. Speaker, three and a half years ago, in the lead-up to the election, there was a party called the Liberals who had this wonderful idea that they were going to do great things when they were in government.

Applause.

Mr. Prue: I see I'm getting applause all over the place for this.

They had this book where they set out their 200-plus promises of the wonderful things they were going to do in their four years. Sadly, like most great plans that were made by that party, very few have come to bear. And this bill is no exception.

2030

I look at the great book, and at pages 11 and 12 there is a quote in there. It has to do with democratic renewal and democratic reform and what the Liberal Party was going to do in its four years. The quote that is found there says, "Limits on raising and spending money should not be limited to the brief few weeks of an election campaign. In modern politics, much of the 'campaign' spending occurs before the election is even called."

They've had an opportunity here. That's the quote; that's what they were going to do. They were going to set up citizens' juries. They were going to do all kinds of things in order to make the democratic process fairer. So, of course, we looked with great anticipation when the minister stood up the other day and announced that she was bringing down her bill. What a disappointment. What a disappointment that bill has been. Three and a half years have gone by. We had this laudatory goal that they were going to do so much. They were going to do it with the help of citizens' juries. They were going to do it in such an expeditious and wonderful fashion. And what we get here is a bill that does virtually nothing. Unfortunately, even when it does things, it does them in such a way as to actually make it worse out there than make it better. You know the old physicians' motto, "Above all else, do no harm"? I wish that applied to cabinet ministers and this government as well, when it comes to elections and the election process—at least do no harm.

At the present time we have a system in Ontario which, although it is old and creaky, for the most part works. We have a system—I'm not talking here about proportional representation or first past the post. I'm talking about the ordinary system where citizens go out to vote—the system works. You go down to the polling station, you take your identification or your vote-at card, you vote, the people know who you are, and the people in charge at the polling station generally know their jobs, they generally report to people who know their jobs, and things seem to go largely without a hitch in this province of Ontario.

But under this bill, as you see it set up—and I haven't heard any Liberals talk about this yet; maybe I will later—it gives the opportunity for the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, during by-elections to experiment and to report back to the Speaker and, through the Speaker, I suppose to the government and to the House, on all new methods of voting. Although it does not set them out, some of the methods that we know exist across this country and around the world might have some very disastrous consequences if they're followed. But it gives carte blanche to the CEO to do whatever he or she wishes to

do. It gives carte blanche to experiment with Internet voting, that people can vote online. There are some people who say that might be a good thing, but the checks and balances have not yet been discovered to make that system foolproof. It is very easy for hackers to hack into computers. It's very easy for them to hack in and find out personal information and to steal identities so that they can relieve people of some of their hard-earned cash, their savings, their bank accounts, their private materials, their credit cards. All of that is kind of commonplace.

Well, here it is, an opportunity for people to go online, and there are no safeguards set out in the legislation. It simply gives the Chief Electoral Officer carte blanche to experiment with Internet voting. I, for one, have some very real problems with that. I have spoken in this Legislature in the past about being the victim of identity theft. I was the victim, and it took many months for me to right all the wrongs. It didn't cost me any money, but I want to tell you, when they steal your credit cards and your information and they know where your bank accounts are and they change the mailings for all your important documents to some—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Go to your MPP. He'll help you.

Mr. Prue: I was an MPP when all this happened, and I'm going to get into—

Mr. Levac: There's a package here.

Mr. Prue: Okay. There's a package, my friend tells me, here.

But this is how easily it is done in those terms and I would suggest that if it can be done that easily, there is a very real reason that we require people to show up at the polls and to be identified so that these kinds of things don't happen. But here it is, contained within the body of the legislation, that the CEO can do that.

There's another thing that the CEO can experiment with, and that is mail-in ballots. Well, I have to tell you, if anyone has watched what happened in the city of Kawartha Lakes with mail-in ballots in the last municipal election, it would cause most people to run—never mind walk away—so fast that you'd never go near that again. As many as 40% of the mail-in ballots in some parts of the Kawartha Lakes polling divisions were declared invalid when they were sent in; 40% were rejected. These are people who relied on a mail-in ballot, thinking they were doing their civic duty, filling them out to the best of their ability, only to have 40% of them rejected. As a result, there are ongoing court cases in that city, and I think that city will never again experiment with those mail-in ballots. This gives carte blanche for the CEO to go the same route.

We have the whole question about multiple days of voting that the CEO can experiment with. I'm not talking about advance polls; I'm saying they could even experiment and say that voting day is not open for one day from 9 till 9 but is open two or three or four days in a row from 9 to 9, or over weekends or whatever. That is a possibility that exists, and the legislation would allow the CEO to do it with no by-your-leave except to report

within 21 days to the Speaker. What does the Speaker do with it? I don't know. Does the Speaker table it in front of this House? Does the Speaker seek the approval of the government? Does the Speaker seek changes to make this mandatory in general elections after it has been experimented with in one or two by-elections? I'm not sure. But all of that is contained within the body of this bill.

I don't know why the government wants to leave the experimentation in by-elections in the hands of one individual and give him virtually carte blanche to go Internet, mail-in ballots, multiple days of voting and maybe some other things I can't even think of or imagine, but it's all there.

The second thing I looked at in the bill was the identification restrictions. On the face of it, it's not a bad idea. On the face of it, people going in to vote would require two pieces of identification. If you were going in on a proxy vote—and I know that many people have elderly relatives or elderly friends who are unable to get out of the house but want to exercise their franchise. It is quite common for people to have a proxy vote and to take it in and cast the ballot on election day for that friend or relative who is infirm. Right now, you go in, you get the signed statement, you take the signed statement to the polling division, you have it authorized, you get authority to vote on election day, a second ballot, and hopefully and trustfully those people will exercise what their infirm or bedridden friend or relative would want them to vote. But what is going to be required now is two pieces of identification from the voter and two pieces of identification which they will have to carry from the infirm relative. No longer will it be a signature that is necessary, that is witnessed. That won't do. In fact, the person will have to come to the voting booth with four pieces of identification.

I don't know what thought process was going on in the government's mind, because the pieces of identification have not been identified. Will a driver's licence be sufficient? Will you have to have a passport? Will it have to be a photo identification from the government? Is a credit card or a library card sufficient? Is a bill? I know sometimes they use a phone bill or a gas bill to show proof of residence. Will that be acceptable? It's not here. It's to be determined by the Chief Electoral Officer. Quite frankly, I don't know how many problems that is going to cause.

I do know that when this same issue was raised in the federal House, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, the federal person in charge of elections, cautioned the committee looking at this in Parliament not to do it because in his estimation 1.1 million voters in Canada, if they followed similar rules, would find themselves disenfranchised. That's what's going to happen in Canada. We have approximately one third of the population, so one can only assume that about 400,000 people, if you follow through on your bill, will find themselves disenfranchised because they don't have two pieces of documentation or two pieces that the CEO will require on election day.

2040

The thing that perplexes me most in all of this is that the identification cards will not be required of those who show up with a vote-at card—you know those vote-at cards that, if you go to any apartment building where people have moved, you see in the garbage in huge numbers? So people can literally rummage through those garbage bins that are beside the post office boxes in apartment buildings, where I have seen as many as 20 and 30 on the day when they're delivered, and take those out and go to the polling station and they require no identification whatsoever under this bill.

I have no idea why the government thinks everyone has to have two pieces of identification, but none if they have a vote-at card. Of all the fraudulent votes of people who have been found to vote fraudulently, far and away the greatest number who are actually caught are those who show up with the vote-at card, and it is easy to get hold of many, many of those and it is easy to pass yourself off as a person no one knows. This is particularly true in transient communities, where there's a large turnover in apartment blocks, where there are new immigrants, where there are students and where the rent tends to be cheaper.

That is the reality. That's what John-Pierre Kingsley said in Ottawa: Not only are you going to disenfranchise the legitimate people, but you are going to make it even easier for those who fraudulently cast ballots.

I am at a complete loss to understand why this government has framed a bill in such a way, and I have to tell you, I don't think they've thought this through. I don't think those lofty goals and ambitions that they set out three and a half years ago have been anywhere near met. You are making and going to make it more difficult for legitimate voters to cast a ballot and disenfranchise as many as 400,000, if the federal officer is correct, and you are going to enfranchise people who are voting fraudulently, who take those cards and who will not require any identification whatsoever to prove who they are. There it is. There's the legislation. That's where it deals with identification.

I went on to read the bill some more, and I was perplexed again. There's the whole issue of enumeration. Now, we all know, as politicians, when we stop doing the enumeration, the voting lists stink. I don't know about in small towns, but I do know the experience in Toronto—and I'm assured by my friend from Niagara Centre; I guess that's Welland-Thorold mostly—the voting lists stink. They are so badly out of date that by the time you get them and look at who's on the list, virtually they are useless. In the federal experience, up to 1.5 million people across Canada had to go in and register who they were before they could vote on election day. At least 1.5 million people were left off. Those are the ones who wanted to vote. We don't know which ones didn't want to vote because they didn't even bother to look, but there were probably several million Canadians who were disenfranchised and we haven't had a legitimate enumeration in far too many years.

The method we use doesn't work. If you file income tax, of course, you give permission to have your name added to the list. However, many things can go wrong. I look back to my own experience. I don't know whether it was because somebody was trying to perpetrate identity theft on me or whether it was for some other reason, but for four elections in a row I was not on the voters' list. Twice I was a candidate. Once I was an MPP seeking re-election, and I had to go down to register to be in that riding so that I could be a candidate.

I have lived in the same house for 25 years. I have never moved. When they finally did discover my name, I was located somewhere in the northwest end of the city, somewhere on Steeles Avenue near Dufferin. I have never lived there in my life, I would probably have a hard time finding it, and there I was. That's the kind of enumeration process on which this country and province relies.

Under the current legislation, we allow the Chief Electoral Officer to conduct an enumeration if he or she thinks it's a good idea. We allow that to happen. Under this brand new "vote for this Liberal" stuff, that's gone. If the Chief Electoral Officer thinks that we need a full enumeration, he or she cannot do it. The Chief Electoral Officer, under this legislation, is stripped of his or her authority to conduct a province-wide enumeration and now can only do what is described in the legislation as a targeted enumeration. The targeted enumeration will take place only following less costly procedures.

First of all, they have to go out and leaflet the area, saying, "Come in or phone us," or "We think there aren't many people who are right on this list," or "It's a new housing development," or do whatever they do.

They're going to do the less costly procedure, and then if they don't get a sufficient return on that, they will have an opportunity to do a full enumeration in particular polls and maybe even in a particular riding, but it will not be Ontario-wide. I ask you to read that, Madam Minister. You're shaking your head. I ask you to read it. There is no longer going to be authority to do an Ontario-wide enumeration. We haven't had one in this province since I can't even remember when. In every single election, it's the same thing: going around to places and begging people to come out and put their names on the list, and that is onerous to many of them. That is all the disincentive they need to vote. That is all of the worry: that they have to go down to the Chief Election Officer in the particular riding, swear out oaths, bring identification, line up, give the information, leave, wait two or three weeks, and get a card in the mail which says, "You're now on the list and you can vote," and that they have to do it early enough for even that to happen. Failing that, they have to do it on election day.

I would think that the greatest possible good this government could do would be to return to the time when we had enumerations.

Jean-Pierre Kingsley, again, in Ottawa, said that in the last federal election, somewhere around one million Canadians went to register that they were in fact electors so they could vote. I would have to assume that for

Ontario it would be around 300,000 or 400,000 people, given the size of our population, and possibly it could be more, because we have a far greater proportion of recent immigrants and people who recently become Canadian citizens in Ontario than in other provinces.

The Chief Electoral Officer will be able to do a targeted registration wherever there is grounds to do so and—

Mr. Kormos: Now we're at quorum risk.

Mr. Prue: Is there a quorum risk? Not yet, but you'll inform me if there is.

Mr. Kormos: If anybody leaves. But then, I suspect something's going to happen before that.

Mr. Prue: He or she can do a targeted registration where he or she believes there are a lot of young people, where he or she believes there are a lot of new Canadians, or where he or she believes there is a high mobility, but how would anyone know that other than the census track? Would that be confined to university towns, where you know that people go and stay for a couple of years and attend classes and leave? Would that be targeted for downtown areas of Toronto or Mississauga or London, where there were a lot of new immigrants, and would the places where immigrants live be targeted for enumerations or targeted registration? How do you target where young people are? I don't know. It seems to me that young people are pretty widely dispersed throughout this province and that no real place has more young people, really, than any other. The percentages are very small and are usually confined to housing and where the housing is available and cheap for families and where people grow up. They often move when they are young, and that becomes problematic.

Also contained within the body of the legislation is the provision for new registration agents versus enumerators; I'm not quite clear on how these are any different, but it seems to me that the whole role of enumerators has been taken away.

2050

There were a couple of good quotes that I would like to read into the record on this very point. Again, this would come from the 2003 study by McGill University's Jerome Black evaluating Canada's registration methods. He concluded that a "permanent list approach has contributed to diminishing voter turnout and has accentuated existing participation gaps across social groups." That's the end of the quote. In a nutshell, that means that by having the permanent list that we have enjoyed or not enjoyed in Ontario for so many years, we have effectively disenfranchised people. And according to that study, which is the best study of its kind, we have "contributed to diminishing voter turnout" and "existing participation gaps across social groups." So we are making it more difficult by not conducting an enumeration for people to vote, and we have found that, as a result, the turnout has declined.

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan spoke earlier tonight. He talked about the way people treat each other in this House, and in fact that may be a turnoff to some voters. But I would hazard a guess that a far greater

turnoff is to see yourself disenfranchised, not having the wherewithal or the ability to find two pieces of identification or the time to go down and make the necessary adjustments.

It was not a difficult task all those years ago when enumerators went from house to house and asked for the people who were over 21 years of age at that time, Canadian citizens who were eligible to vote and were not disenfranchised by some act of Parliament. I know I even did it in one election back in the early 1960s when I was a much younger person, going door to door. We were paid for doing it, although not handsomely, and the list was as fair and accurate as one could possibly imagine. I rue the day that someone thought they could save some money and do a list that has turned out to be so very wrong, and it has been so very wrong in places like apartment buildings, where people have high mobility, particularly in places where there are a lot of recent immigrants. And the government's answer to this has been far less than satisfactory.

There are just a couple of other things I want to talk about at this point. The third party advertising—and I find this to be kind of bizarre. This limits not the amounts of money that third party advertisers can pay, but it is extremely weak. The third party advertisers must report to the Chief Electoral Officer, and they must report everybody who gives them a contribution of more than \$25 towards their third party advertising. But nowhere could I find in the body of this literature anything that limits the amount they can spend, save and except, I suppose, as much as a political party. So you have the possibility of a rich person in Ontario spending as much as an entire party. You have the opportunity here for well-heeled, well-oiled, well-machined groups, perhaps from Bay Street or from a union or from some other place, spending as much as a political party for third party advertising, and the only thing they would be required to do is inform anybody who gave them more than \$25.

If someone who had a million dollars to burn wanted to come in and influence an election and put their own million dollars up, the only thing that would be reported is that Mr. X gave a million dollars for this third party advertising. It would be perfectly legal, and the government and the CEO would have virtually nothing to say about it. I find it extremely weak, and I also find it kind of offensive that the only real control is listing those people who give money above a paltry \$25.

There are some other things I want to talk about, but in honour of Vincent Van Gogh and the ringing that I suddenly hear in my ears, and because this government up to today has been so recalcitrant in coming forward with information—ordinary, little information—that the opposition has asked for and because we truly believe the Auditor General has a place in looking after this Legislature and the people who are in it, I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Prue has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2055 to 2125.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Prue has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 4; the nays are 23.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 of the clock Thursday morning, May 3.

The House adjourned at 2127.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerk-at-the-Table / Greffier parlementaire: Lisa Freedman

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Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
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Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
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Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
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Erie-Lincoln Essex	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Etobicoke Centre Etobicoke-Centre	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North Etobicoke-Nord	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (Ind.)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean-Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Guelph-Wellington	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)

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Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)		Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thornhill	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior	
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	McNeely, Phil (L)		Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Orléans	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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	Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Scarborough–Agincourt	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
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Simcoe–Grey		York West / York-Ouest	
St. Catharines			
St. Paul's			

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 3 May 2007

Jeudi 3 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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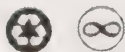
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 mai 2007

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

JOB PROTECTION COMMISSIONER ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE COMMISSAIRE À LA PROTECTION DES EMPLOIS

Mr. Hampton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to provide for a Job Protection Commissioner / Projet de loi 126, Loi prévoyant la nomination d'un commissaire à la protection des emplois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Hampton, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to outline for all members of the Legislature how vitally important a Job Protection Commissioner is and would be for Ontario at this time.

Ontario has lost over 150,000 manufacturing jobs in the last three years. In many communities, these jobs are the core of the community. They are the best-paying jobs in the community; they are the jobs which sustain other jobs and other economic activity in the community. In so many communities, they are the real economic base.

So far, the response of the government too often has been to say to workers and communities, "Oh, I feel your pain, I feel your pain, I feel your pain," but to not do anything significant to address the issues. In my view, much of the manufacturing job loss in this province is preventable and it is avoidable. There are a number of factors that have contributed to this significant loss of manufacturing jobs, but many of these factors are under the control of or can be influenced by governments of some level.

Now, what would a jobs commissioner do? This is not an idea that I claim I creativity over. Other jurisdictions have created this position. In effect, the jobs commissioner is a jobs advocate. The jobs commissioner, when this office was created in British Columbia, was a position entirely independent of government. The jobs commissioner doesn't go around the province handing out cheques. A jobs commissioner, as it was established in British

Columbia, was an independent body. It was staffed with people who knew something about operating manufacturing facilities. It was staffed with people who knew something about labour relations and negotiating collective agreements. It was staffed with people who knew something about corporate finance, especially short- and medium-term finance. It was staffed with people who knew something about export development and export chains and the things you had to go through in terms of developing export financing and then finally export rules.

In British Columbia at the time—we're talking about the early 1990s—people were worried about the risk of losing about 100,000 jobs in the secondary manufacturing of their forest sector. Clearly, 100,000 jobs would be devastating for British Columbia, just as the loss of 150,000 jobs in Ontario has been devastating for communities and workers across this province. But rather than say, "Oh, I feel your pain, I feel your pain," the government of the day there did create the office of the jobs commissioner and did make it independent of government.

The jobs commissioner was proactive. They didn't wait until an announcement was made about a factory closing and 500 people being put out of work. They didn't wait until an announcement came through that a plant was downsizing and 200 or 300 people were going to be put out of work. They recognized that there were some issues affecting their secondary manufacturing sector, so one of the first things they did was to conduct some studies: What are the issues? What are the challenges that many of these plants and factories and manufacturing facilities are facing? Then, with some knowledge of the challenges and the issues that needed to be confronted, they actually went to individual plants and factories and facilities around the province and said, "Look, our information indicates that you may be facing some challenges. We'd like to sit down and talk with you now about these challenges and what we can do to meet these challenges and what we can do to, hopefully, reposition your facility to sustain its output and to sustain jobs and economic activity."

Many employers were happy to come to the table because, having operated in the province for some time, having a commitment to individual communities, they wanted to see their operations sustained. So in many cases employers came to the table, certainly workers and unions came to the table, municipal leaders came to the table, provincial government departments came to the table, even federal government departments came to the

table; in many cases, even financial institutions standing in the background came to the table. Once you had everybody at the table, you could sit down and do a deeper analysis: What are the challenges we face and what are the things we need to do to reposition this facility?

In other cases, employers were not willing to come to the table. In some cases, employers were already in the backroom making the decision, "We'll move this operation to Mexico," or, "We'll move this operation somewhere else." In those cases, it took moral suasion on the part of the jobs commissioner to get some of those employers to the table. But if workers were willing to come to the table and their unions were willing to come to the table and municipal leaders and provincial representatives and federal representatives were willing to come to the table, in many cases those employers were reluctantly persuaded to come to the table because they didn't want to be identified as selfish and self-interested individuals or selfish and self-interested corporations that were not good corporate citizens.

1010

Once everyone was at the table—and there are case studies of this that I understand are being looked at in business schools and industrial programs across the country—it was, in many cases, possible to identify specifically what the issues were. I'll be blunt: In some cases the issue was hydro rates. Different kinds of manufacturing facilities could be penalized or prejudiced because of the way hydro rates were established. That is certainly the case in this province today, across northern Ontario. Then the call went out to the provincial government—"Address this issue"—and pressure was put on the provincial government to address the issue. In some cases, it may have been a financial institution that was nervous about what was happening in the forest products sector, and the financial institution was calling in short-term or medium-term loans, in which case the issue was, "How do we renegotiate some of this short-term and medium-term financing so that these workers aren't put out of work and this facility isn't shut down simply because someone in the financial community may have over-extended themselves?" In some cases, it was about re-developing an export chain. In some cases, it was about export financing, in which case the federal government was called to the table: "What are you going to do to address these issues?"

The net result in British Columbia over 11 years is that, of those 100,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs that were originally identified as being at risk, 75,000 were successfully repositioned and sustained so that many of those facilities continue to operate today and many of those jobs that were at risk continue to be in place in those communities today, sustaining those communities, sustaining working families and contributing to the economy of that province.

What do we have in Ontario today? I can tell you that in the part of Ontario I represent, we have paper mill after paper mill after paper mill being closed. In every

case, when they make their announcement, they're asked, "What's the issue here?" and they say, "Look, the Ontario government is forcing us to pay seven cents a kilowatt hour for electricity that only costs one cent a kilowatt hour to produce in our part of the province. Meanwhile, our competitors in British Columbia and Quebec, in Manitoba and Minnesota, Wisconsin and in the southern United States are paying 3.5 or 4 or 4.5 cents a kilowatt hour. Electricity is a big part of our cost structure, 25% or 30% of our everyday cost structure. We cannot continue in the face of this kind of unfairness." So they're either closing or they're simply saying, "We're not going to make any further investments in Ontario."

Just this week I was at the Genfast plant in Brantford. In 2001, the Genfast Manufacturing plant was identified as the manufacturing facility of the year in Brantford. The plant is still profitable; it still makes money. I hear the minister of industry talk about the advanced manufacturing strategy of the government. Well, the Genfast plant should be a poster child for the advanced manufacturing plan of the government. But they're being closed down and people are being put out of work. Why? One of the reasons is, as the company has said to workers, "You know what? It's easier and quicker for us to close a facility in Ontario rather than do it in another jurisdiction, where we'd face some barriers." That's why we need a jobs commissioner in Ontario to deal with these kinds of issues.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Good morning. It's very important to talk about job protection. The leader of the third party was talking about creating a job commissioner to have job protection. We on this side of the House don't believe in this position in order to protect our jobs; we strongly believe on this side of the House that it's by creating a good environment to attract business to Ontario to invest in many different companies and to invest in many different research and innovation programs to create protection, to persuade people to come to Ontario to open and also hire many people.

I was listening to the honourable member, and he referenced British Columbia. To my knowledge, British Columbia cancelled the job commissioner because it didn't think it's the right thing to do. As a matter of fact, they want to follow in the steps of Ontario because, as the honourable member knows very well, Ontario is creating a good environment by investing a lot of money in the health care system, making it accessible for all the people across the province. This is very important for investment when they decide to come to Ontario.

Another part is to invest in our post-secondary education to create good, skilled workers to be able to operate and function and supply those factories or those companies that want to open in Ontario. Our strategy is also to persuade many different factories to come to Ontario, like Hino, like Toyota in Woodstock, like Diamond Aircraft. Many different factories across the province remain in Ontario because our support is

tremendous and a great help for them to compete at an international level.

I understand that the honourable member wants to protect jobs in Ontario. It's a very good and noble thing to do, and that's what we're doing in this House. We have a Minister of Economic Development and Trade and a small business minister and also a labour minister who work day and night to make sure the infrastructure and the environment are there for the workers and for companies to come and open in Ontario.

I have had the chance to go with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to many different spots in the province, and one of them was in my riding of London—Fanshawe; we went to Diamond Aircraft. We gave them our support because they were going to hire 500 extra workers to support their factory. Also, they've partnered with Fanshawe College to create good, skilled workers to supply their demand. All that happened because of our investment in that area, which I guess was a million dollars going to Fanshawe College and Diamond Aircraft to have a joint venture, a program to train people for the aviation skills they needed. There are also a lot of programs across Ontario, like apprenticeships, in conjunction with many different unions and with colleges and universities to supply the demand for those factories and companies that want to open in Ontario.

I want to tell you something very important too. Last Friday we went to the University of Western Ontario and invested more than \$14 million in many different areas for research and innovation. I want to tell you, that innovation system and that research in terms of audiology science was labelled number one on the whole globe. This is the way we think we can persuade companies, persuade scientists, persuade people to come and invest in Ontario, by creating a good environment. It's also very important to know we have a public education system. We have great infrastructure: highways, roads. All these elements make it easier for many different factories and companies to open in Ontario.

This is part of our strategy: creating an environment, not creating a position. A position doesn't attract business. It's when we have a vibrant government willing to support, willing to invest, willing to travel the world—to China, to India, to Pakistan, to Europe, to the Middle East—to persuade companies to open in Ontario, to open trade with many different nations. Due to our investment, due to our strategy, we've created roughly about 400,000 net new jobs in this province.

I think we're on the right track and in the right direction. I hope we can continue to work to protect jobs in Ontario, not by appointing a person but by creating an environment and also supporting financially many different companies to open in Ontario.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock): I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak to Bill 126, the Job Protection Commissioner Act, 2006, brought forward by the leader of the third party. He has brought this forward because the present McGuinty Liberal government hasn't been doing a good job—

losing manufacturing jobs almost daily. It's a sad, sad fact out there.

I'm very passionate about my communities, as I know all the members of the Legislature are, and how we can work to keep good-paying manufacturing jobs, and keep these things, especially in rural Ontario, where we're having a hard time. Yesterday was a terrible day for me, because I lost a manufacturing plant in Lindsay: Fleetwood had to close its doors. It has been there since 1972. At one time within the last year, it was employing over 500 people. It has been having to scale down over the months; they've been struggling. I've written letters to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, going back a year and a half now, to say, "What can we do to keep jobs in Ontario?" Eastern Ontario, which this is part of, was hit very, very hard. They need some incentives to stay there, to keep those employees. So yesterday's headlines, "Fleetwood Closing Its Doors"—at this point 315 were left out of work, just there.

1020

But we all know that there's a huge spinoff effect in our communities. These are valuable jobs. There are other businesses that supplied parts to them; there are the economic spinoffs of just the towns—buying groceries, going to the dress shops. So when a loss that big comes to a small community, it's a huge, devastating impact. We have young families and experienced workers, skilled trades. Opportunities are gone. Youth and summer employment opportunities are gone. Staff were sent home yesterday and told they wouldn't have their jobs past July 25.

One of the employees was quoted in the Lindsay Daily Post as saying, "It's disappointing. There are a lot of people that work here in this town. You've got 300 people here that buy groceries.... I'm also at an age, 55 years old, where it's going to be pretty hard to find a job." It's a very tough pill to take in our community. It's a very tragic thing that has happened there. I spent most of my time on the phone yesterday, talking to the company to say, "What can we do? How can we help the employees you have had there?" many of whom I know personally, because the company has been there since 1972.

Like I said, it's hard for us, once we lose an industry, to try to get new industries built up. That is why the Leader of the Opposition has been bringing these resolutions before us today, because something has to be done. There's a critical situation in our small towns and all over Ontario. We want people to stay in our communities. We could lose these people from our communities.

I know that my colleague from Halton, back in December 2005, presented a motion requesting the government to act and recognize the growing crisis in communities affected by significant job losses as a result of, among other things, plant closures. My view is, one job loss is significant; every job loss is significant. It's important for the people here today to know that under Dalton McGuinty's watch, there were over 120,000 or more job losses in the manufacturing sector—and he was quoted as saying that's a hiccup.

My colleague from Waterloo–Wellington more recently, in November 2006, presented a resolution which received support from all parties. It called attention to addressing job loss issues in the province of Ontario. But we have yet to see any of these things acted upon. If the attitude is that with over 100,000 manufacturing job losses at that time, the Premier says it's a hiccup—it's not a hiccup. It's very important; it's trend-setting. We see more and more job losses every day. I know my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is going to speak later. He also had a plant close down yesterday in his riding—more job losses. It's on a daily, daily basis, and we haven't seen a plan from this government. There has been no vision, no commitment to address this growing situation. It is bad out there in Ontario.

My question is, what will our children and our grandchildren do to find the good-paying jobs in the future? With the increasing and rapid erosion of these manufacturing jobs, the lack of action by this government, very few of our children and grandchildren are going to find jobs, especially in rural Ontario. There is a lot that ministries, as I mentioned earlier, along with this government, could do to show leadership in the province of Ontario. Liberal policies leave business and industry struggling. They're struggling to meet regulatory burdens, ever-increasing taxes, energy instability. They're pushing businesses like Fleetwood out of Ontario, and we cannot stand by and let that happen.

We need short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies to assist people who have lost jobs, just like my colleague from Waterloo–Wellington's resolution suggested. It was passed last November by all parties, and we still haven't seen it. The job losses in the forestry sectors that were spoken about so passionately before—you know what? It's going to be too little, too late. Promising an Ontario Manufacturing Council that was in the recent budget with no dates, no timelines and no plan—the consistent theme with the Liberal rhetoric and electioneering. It's time for action now, and my communities in Haliburton–Victoria–Brock need much, much more.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this very important motion before us here today.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's coming to you more naturally now—that's good to see.

It's with great pride that I rise this morning to speak in favour of this very worthy and thoughtful legislation that's been put forth by my leader, the member for Kenora–Rainy River. The member for Kenora–Rainy River embodies the type of strong, proactive leadership that the people of Ontario are clamouring for, and I have no doubt that he will be richly rewarded on October 10 for his tireless efforts on their behalf. We are already seeing evidence of that with the recent by-election returns in Parkdale–High Park and in my own riding of York South–Weston, and I believe we'll see more of it very, very soon.

It occurred to me this morning that the last time I rose in this House on a Thursday morning, it was to speak in favour of the anti-scab legislation proposed by my colleague the member for Niagara Centre. When it came to that legislation, the members on the government side contorted themselves into pretzels trying to figure out what to do. At the end of the day, a number of them voted in favour of that bill. I'm hoping that this morning, all of them join with the New Democrats to vote in favour of this bill calling for a much-needed creation of a job protection commissioner.

Ontario is crying out for the creation of such a commissioner, an independent agency. We are bleeding well-paying manufacturing jobs across the province. We've heard the figure: more than 150,000 have disappeared in recent years. That's more than one in 10 jobs in manufacturing in the province—gone.

When I say that I hope we can count on the support of the government side for this bill, I'm hoping that the members opposite accept this situation with a higher degree of seriousness than their leader, the Premier.

Just last month, the Premier made what I would call an incredibly unbelievable and insensitive remark about the crisis in manufacturing in Ontario. Speaking in St. Catharines in mid-April, he said, "Those who lose their jobs in the manufacturing jobs can find jobs in other sectors." Thanks for the thoughtfulness, Premier. That sure sounds like a man who is out of touch with the reality that is confronted by thousands of hard-working Ontario families who have seen their livelihoods disappear as a result of his government's inaction.

It shouldn't surprise anyone in this province that this is the same man who gave himself a \$40,000 raise just a few days before Christmas. That same amount—\$40,000—would go a long way toward improving the plight of a working family anywhere in this province, including in my riding of York South–Weston, where the unemployment rate is considerably higher than the provincial average and where the average household income is barely more than the Premier's raise.

My riding has seen significant job losses in recent years. The latest to go was Kodak, which shed the last few hundred jobs at its Mount Dennis production facility last year. Perhaps it will be of comfort to the Premier and his colleagues on the government bench to know that the Kodak lands, 52 acres in all, are likely to turn into a new home for—what else?—big box retail outlets. So those workers who earned a very good and fair salary at Kodak will be left to, perhaps, hawk sporting goods or peddle electronic gadgets for the minimum wage that the Premier refuses to raise immediately.

With any luck, I suppose, those workers will be able to land two or three of those jobs so that they can afford to pay the mortgage each month and feed their kids. Unfortunately, in the greater Toronto area, it isn't just Kodak that's left. In the past five years alone, this part of our province has lost one fifth of our manufacturing jobs. That's a staggering amount. A few recent examples: Tower Automotive—178 jobs gone; Smurfit-Stone container—140 jobs gone; Mueller Canada—158 jobs gone.

1030

The count rises and rises and the toll on working families mounts and mounts, yet we get nothing from this government, not even a peep from the Minister of Economic Development over there, who, just a couple of weeks back, Mr. Speaker—I believe you were here for that debate since it's in your region—sat glued in her place and didn't even rise to speak out on behalf of her constituents in the great city of Windsor when, ironically enough, the member from Kenora–Rainy River presented a constructive motion that would have greatly improved the economic conditions there in the city of Windsor.

The inaction of that minister speaks to this government's "say nothing, do nothing" attitude when it comes to protecting Ontario jobs. Thank goodness we have the member for Kenora–Rainy River filling the leadership vacuum. His bill would give Ontario much-needed direction in enhancing our economic competitiveness and effectiveness. The commissioner that the bill would create would work with both employers and labour to come up with the strategies and tactics to ensure that good, well-paying jobs are protected. It's a concept that has worked in other jurisdictions and will work here in Ontario if this government supports it today.

I know that labour leaders from across this province support this bill. In fact, it's why a number of them were here this morning on the front steps of the Legislature for a press conference. They brought with them workers who themselves have lost their jobs and now face economic uncertainty. These labour leaders and their members realize that the fight to protect jobs in our province is too important to stand on the sidelines.

New Democrats welcome their support and applaud their determination in this fight. Their hard-working members are well served by their leadership.

I want to wrap up so that one or two of my colleagues can also speak to this bill. I want to close by urging members of the government side to think of their own communities this morning, to think of the job losses in those communities and the devastating economic impact they have had and to think of the good that the passage of this bill would do to curb future job losses in their communities. I say to them, your constituents are watching. Do the right thing this morning: Support this bill; join New Democrats in supporting it.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I just want to start off by saying that in terms of the economy, what we have to do as a government is to ensure that what is in place will allow for economic prosperity. That is the role of our government. I want to start off with saying that. As a result of the Dalton McGuinty government's creating the right environment, 327,000 net new jobs have been created since October 2003.

I'm going to start there, but I want to seize this opportunity to talk about rural Ontario and what we have done as a government to make sure we are able to seize our opportunities and move forward, more specifically as related to Huron–Bruce.

I just can't help but start off in this manner, as the member from Kenora–Rainy River talks about "feeling

your pain." Well, I represent the most rural riding in the province of Ontario, that being Huron–Bruce, and if his energy policy goes forward, I hope he can hear me today saying, "Can you feel my pain?" Bruce Power employs a third of my riding. When we look at the work that had to be done from my riding to make sure we move forward, I hope you can hear my voice when we talk about feeling pain. I know there has been a lot of conversation, certainly some conversation from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, who talked about feeling the pain of rural communities. Well, where was their government when you downloaded on rural communities that had no ability to pay for the services that were downloaded upon them? We talk about economic prosperity. We talk about the formula that needs to be in place, the foundation. When I hear comments like that, I find it very, very difficult, I must say.

I believe that to go forward, and specifically in rural Ontario, we have to ensure that we have a strong health care system. Within the riding of Huron–Bruce, I have eight hospitals, and I am only going to speak specifically to the hospitals, knowing that health care is much more than hospitals, but I am going to talk about the hospital sector for just one minute.

When we took over government in 2003, I can tell you that all our hospitals were running deficits. Threats of closures were the daily conversation. I am very proud to say that all of my eight hospitals today have balanced budgets, are enhancing services and hiring more nurses. We have never seen the investment by any government—and that represents a 29% increase overall in the province of Ontario in the health care budget; that represents \$8.5 billion. We have gone from closures to hiring. I can tell you, in rural Ontario—and some of you have been up in my riding and you know what it's like to get from A to B to C—when our roads are closed, you're not going anywhere. So there's this investment in the hospital sector, understanding that there are many providers in the health care sector, but I'm just going to speak to the hospitals.

Then I'll talk about better schools, higher test scores. I talk about post-secondary, but when we took over government in 2003, what we had going on was school closures. What we had going on was community fighting community, pitted against each other. As for community members, all of their time was focused on fundraising, getting out there and talking about stopping the school closures, ensuring that their children had—and I know that there's a book in the future. We talk about the children who came through the Harris years of schooling. My children went through that: strikes, protests. It was not, I tell you, an environment where one could go forward.

But what have we done? In post-secondary, for the first time in a rural riding, the rural riding of Huron–Bruce, we now have post-secondary available to us. In Kincardine, we have a portal. At Bruce Power, the Power Workers' Union has gone to Fanshawe College, on site, training millwrights. In the town of Goderich we have

post-secondary education available. No government before the McGuinty government had ever made that commitment to the riding of Huron—Bruce, so when I see people stand up and talk about that—I don't want to lose sight of tax competitiveness. If that's not available, we then cannot go forward.

Unfortunately, so many other members want to speak that I must stop talking now, but I do thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): I certainly want to stand here and support the leader of the third party on his resolution today with regard to a jobs commissioner. It's similar in fashion to what we asked for last year—in fact, a motion that the government supported. It won in a voice vote here in the Legislature, so you would think that the government would be willing to support this, considering the record they have with job losses in this province.

I received information yesterday about another 100 jobs to be lost in my riding: Trimag, in Haley. General Motors is one of their primary customers. Where are the jobs going? You might be interested to hear this. They're going to Quebec, because the Quebec government is actually doing something to attract and retain manufacturing jobs, but the Ontario government is missing in action on that file. So we continue to bleed jobs while other provinces are attracting them in the manufacturing sector, because they're doing the things necessary to do that.

1040

The member for Huron—Bruce went all over the map, so I suppose I have some latitude here. I want to talk about Tuesday and yesterday, and how it has sunk in this chamber. I talked to some members who have been here for between 20 and 30 years—20 and 30 years—and they have never, ever in their history here witnessed what they saw in the last two days; that is, the government of the day devoting some of their statement time and all of their question period time to attacking, personally, a member of the opposition of this Legislature—never before in the history of those members, who have been here since 1977. It gives you an indication of where this has gone.

On Tuesday, my colleague from Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford was the target—

The Deputy Speaker: I would really prefer that you address the bill at hand.

Mr. Yakabuski: On Tuesday, my colleague from Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford was the target. He has lost jobs in his riding. Yesterday, I was the target, and I have lost jobs in my riding. I want to talk about my riding, Mr. Speaker, because yesterday I was accused of not standing up for my riding. I was accused of not standing up for my riding, and that's what I'm doing today for jobs in my riding and for the constituents of my riding who still might have a job. Yesterday, a number of things were said, and I want to address a couple of them.

The members for Prince Edward—Hastings, Sault Ste. Marie, Huron—Bruce, Northumberland and Nipissing lowered themselves to that level in this Legislature. They should be ashamed of themselves. They are all desperate

people. I want to address a couple of things. You know, what is sad is that they are allowing themselves to be pawns of the Premier's office. When you abandon whatever principles you have with regard to common decency, then you have to ask yourself whether or not you really should be here.

The member for Prince Edward—Hastings talked about the closing of the Pembroke Civic Hospital. That hospital was closed by the hospital restructuring board. What he failed to recognize is that the previous government invested \$38 million in improvements and expansion at the Pembroke Regional Hospital.

The member for Nipissing completely incorrectly accused me of being opposed to supply management. I'm on record, and every farm organization in my riding knows my stand on supply management: I have been four-square in favour of it since I came here and before I came here. In fact, I'm one of the first signatories to FarmGate5. That's the kind of stuff that gets said from those members across the way.

The Minister of Agriculture accused me of not being interested in the Klaesi digester project in my riding. Well, I have in my hand a letter that I sent to the minister asking them to support the Klaesis and the extension of their biodigester program in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. You would think that the Minister of Agriculture would take the time to understand her own file. This is what happens when people jump to conclusions because they are so bent on trying to attack, in an ad hominem fashion, another member in this Legislature. Why have we sunk to these depths?

The other day they attacked my friend from Toronto—Davenport—

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Yakabuski: Toronto—Danforth—my apologies—in question period. The day before, myself and my friend from Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford—

The Deputy Speaker: If you're not going to speak to the issue, at least speak through the Chair.

Mr. Yakabuski: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I keep looking for a signal from the man who proposed this bill today, my friend the leader of the third party, and he says to go ahead, so it must be making him happy; it's his resolution.

I guess my—oh yes, and then accusing me of not recognizing things the government has done. I didn't know that when I was elected I was supposed to be the press secretary for the government. I thought it was my job to be the loyal opposition of Her Majesty. If the government wants me to go out and advertise them, they're going to have to pay me through their party reserves as well. But I am not here to do their job. It is their job to tell what wonderful things they may or may not be doing, which they do. They send press releases to my riding all the time.

When you get into the business of attacking a member here—you know that old saying that when you take the toothpaste out of the tube, you can't put it back in?—you

should really ask yourselves if that's the road you want to go down. I am quite prepared, I am very prepared, to stand on my record in my riding in October, because you do not do me a disservice when you behave like that; you do yourselves a disservice.

You know who else you do a disservice to? The people that you are hoping will run against me. You're doing them a disservice. All of those ridiculous Hansards that we have here are going to be distributed in my riding and people are going to ask themselves, "What kind of people are on the other side of this House?" Just check the press, check the current events and see what happens in my riding, and you would see how silly you were yesterday.

I'm prepared to be judged by the people. I hope that you people are prepared to be judged as well.

Mr. Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise in support of Bill 126 to bring a jobs commissioner into Ontario.

We've talked a lot about numbers, but I want to talk a bit about human experience and human impact. I grew up in the east end of Hamilton, near Stelco. People on my street worked at Stelco. The guy next door worked in a broom factory. My father was an auto mechanic. We didn't live wealthy lives, luxurious lives, but we lived stable lives. People had incomes that allowed them to eat decently, to have hope for the future, to live lives that people wanted to live.

When you look at what the population of this province needs, manufacturing jobs are a crucial part of it, and when those jobs are gone, there is a very significant, very substantial, very painful human impact.

When I was a teenager, I was in Flint, Michigan, on a—what can I say? I was there because I was in a judo club. We were down for the Canusa Games, Hamilton versus Flint, and I stayed with folks in Flint. The breadwinner of the family I stayed with worked for General Motors. As in Hamilton, these people lived fairly modest but, frankly, secure lives. They knew they had an income coming in that allowed them to live a relatively decent life. That family that I stayed with, and many other families in Flint, decades later were plunged into chaos with the shutdown of the industrial base in that city.

Michael Moore, in his film *Roger and Me*, documented what happened in that city: people losing their homes, people desperately trying to find whatever McJob they could get their hands on, because that's what there was. There were scenes in that film of the sheriff going in and repossessing people's homes, of houses that were left empty, abandoned, because no one could afford to either buy them or rent them—neighbourhoods devastated.

So when we come here and we hear from this government that the loss of 150,000 manufacturing jobs over the last three years really is not that big a deal because we've been working so hard to create other jobs, I have to say, it doesn't cut any ice. This is a situation that has to be taken as a significant priority by the government because of the human impact, and when a practical suggestion comes forward—not, as the member for Kenora-Rainy

River has said, a wholly new leap into political policy-making, but simply taking an idea that has worked in another jurisdiction and saying, "We have a crisis here"—we need to apply it.

This morning, I was out at the front of this building with a number of colleagues from the labour movement who were talking about their anger and the anger of their members who feel that they've been cut loose, abandoned, who cannot get action or even communication from this government. I was going to say that they got tea and sympathy. Well, I don't think they got the tea, and the sympathy was very late in coming, if they got it at all.

1050

We are in a situation where people's lives and communities are coming apart, and for the government to not embrace a practical suggestion for moving things forward, in my opinion, is a dereliction of that government's duty. It needs to act on multiple fronts.

If we want to have a stable society in this province, people have to have jobs. One of the reasons that many of our cities are much more stable than American cities is that we have had a lot of people working at stable employment. People have income. Ethnic tension and racial tension are reduced when people have jobs. What we're doing here is seeding the ground for future social conflict.

Some people seem to think, and I think the Premier is one of them, "Oh, okay, we lose those manufacturing jobs." They go to India. They go to China. They're emerging industrial powerhouses. I have nothing against those people improving their lives. I think they need to improve their lives. But I have to tell you, losing that manufacturing base is not the end of it. I talk to a lot of newcomers from India, from China, from Pakistan, from Bangladesh. These are bright, capable, energetic people. Do you think that as those economies develop, they are simply going to continue doing the hard work? No. They are now going to move into those jobs in accounting and information technology and engineering that I think this Premier thinks are immune.

We have to work in a multi-faceted way, in every aspect of our economy, to build up and maintain that jobs base. That's all that's being put forward here today. How do we ensure, from as many angles as possible, that people have stable lives and that this province has a stable economy? Is it wrong to have someone who is an advocate, someone who in many ways would be like the Environmental Commissioner—with more powers, with more intervention duties—who would go out looking proactively for threats to employment and trying to pull people together so that those threats didn't materialize?

What's the record cited by Howard Hampton? The record is that 75% of the jobs they wanted to save were saved. Well, in Ontario, that would mean that far more than 100,000 of those lost 150,000 jobs would have been saved. Hundreds of thousands of people dependent on those jobs, communities dependent on those jobs, would be in situations where their lives would be stable, where they wouldn't be wondering whether they can hold onto

their homes, and frankly, in some communities they wouldn't be wondering, "Who can buy my home? Who is going to buy this place that now will have to be abandoned?" Talk to people from northern communities about the fact that they've sunk their life savings into their homes and now no one's there to buy them.

This is a government that has decided that laissez-faire 19th-century economics work. It certainly seems to work for the Premier, but it doesn't work for the people of Ontario. This government is going to be held accountable this fall when laissez-faire is put forward and people who have been abandoned, people who have been told, "Well, we did all we could. Too bad, so sad. You're on your own" are going to be speaking out. They speak out in rural areas. They'll be speaking out in small towns. They'll be speaking out in southwestern Ontario. They're going to say, "You didn't do enough. You did us in."

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join in this discussion this morning. We in the riding of Peterborough have been fortunate. Just yesterday, my good friend the vice-president of nuclear products of GE Canada announced the first major expansion of their nuclear products division in Peterborough since 1955. They'll have a massive expansion on their Peterborough site, so that's good news for the people of Peterborough. It will also be good news for my good friend the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke: GE have their nuclear pellet operation in Arnprior, Ontario, which is an essential part of the expansion that will take place in Peterborough, to continue the fine work that's done in that operation in Arnprior, Ontario.

We've also been very fortunate: Numet Engineering, another manufacturing company in Peterborough—major expansion; Minute Maid juice, which is part of the Coca-Cola umbrella, has also had expansions in Peterborough.

But I have followed the forestry industry in northwestern Ontario. One of the challenges up there was certainly the appreciation of the Canadian dollar from 63 cents to today, when it's exchanged at about US90 cents.

Look at some of the operational reports from those companies in northwestern Ontario. When the dollar was at 63 cents, their profit base increased substantially, but when you start looking at their reinvestment programs that went back into capital equipment and innovation, that was a very small part of their annual reports. Many of those companies took advantage of making profits based on an exchange rate, and during that period of time they didn't enhance their competitive position.

When you do a comparison, look at the major forestry operators in Finland, Norway and Sweden. If you look at those three countries, where electricity rates are three times higher than what we have in Ontario, those forestry companies in those countries remain highly competitive. Why do they do so? They remain highly competitive because the principles of those companies were reinvesting in new technology, new processes and training their workforce. So what have we done here in the province of Ontario?

That there have been very few questions on the budget in this House, but I will note, on page 15, in northwestern

Ontario we've put together an economic facilitator. If I remember correctly, Dr. Robert Rosehart was the former president of Lakehead University. He's now the president of Wilfrid Laurier University and will act as an economic facilitator, bringing together all the parties in northwestern Ontario to look at the challenges. I readily admit: there are certainly challenges in the forestry sector in northwestern Ontario.

We also announced in our budget that we'll have a new Ontario Manufacturing Council to bring together the brightest and best to look at innovative solutions for manufacturers in Ontario. That is complemented by the work that my good friend from Perth-Middlesex, who's the PA to the Premier, is doing with innovation and technology, formulating programs to make key investments in manufacturing to make them efficient and competitive with the world. We have the talent. We are making the investments to keep manufacturing competitive here in Ontario.

One of the things we've done is we accelerated the capital tax—something the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has been asking us to do. Secondly, in our budget—no one asked any questions about this—we are lifting the business education tax, having a flat rate across the province of Ontario of 1.6%, which will make Ontario businesses—large, small and medium—and other parts of the sector much more competitive. Again, that was something put forward to us by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and recommended by smaller chambers of commerce right across Ontario. It's so important to get those fundamentals right.

We're also investing \$6.5 billion over the next five years in Reaching Higher; again, to put those dollars into post-secondary education to make sure that Ontario has a very competitive workforce. I look at Durham region, where we have the University of Ontario Institute of Technology coupling with General Motors again, making key investment in that manufacturing—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Speaking about jobs in Ontario, the government talks ad nauseam about their Toyota plant in Ingersoll, which is great news. However, in the neighbouring riding of Elgin-Middlesex there have been six companies which have closed, losing 3,400 jobs—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hampton, you have two minutes to respond.

1100

Mr. Hampton: I want to continue where I left off. The reality is that we have a number of manufacturing facilities in this province, some of which have downsized or already closed and some of which are at risk of closure or downsizing. I'm merely proposing that instead of waiting until the sign goes up out front, "Facility closed," "Property for lease" or "For sale," the McGuinty government take some proactive steps, that we as legislators in Ontario take some proactive steps.

That's what the jobs commissioner in British Columbia did. They didn't wait until a factory, a plant, a

facility was putting up the "For sale" sign. They did proactive studies. They went to companies, sat down with them and the workers, union leaders, community leaders, financial institutions, provincial government departments, federal government departments and they asked, "What are the things that we need to do to reposition and sustain these jobs?"

I hear government members opposed to the suggestion, and let me tell you why I think there's some opposition. Members of the McGuinty government are probably worried that a jobs commissioner would point out that the McGuinty government's policy for driving hydro rates through the roof has in fact destroyed 40,000 good-paying forest sector jobs in northern Ontario, and they don't want that out there. A jobs commissioner would point out that some factories have closed in this province.

For example, Ferranti-Packard in St. Catharines told the workers, "We're closing this plant, keeping others open in other places in North America because it's easier and quicker to close down an operation in Ontario than anywhere else."

We can't afford to lose these jobs. We need to be proactive. We need a jobs commissioner in Ontario.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I know the members would like to join me in welcoming Bob Huget, a former member of the 35th Parliament from Sarnia, in the members' west gallery.

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I move that, in the opinion of this House, our farmers and the agri-food industry play a vital role in the Ontario economy and that this assembly reaffirm its strong and unwavering support for the supply management system that helps stabilize incomes for Ontario farm families and ensures a stable supply of Ontario-produced food for families around the world to enjoy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Van Bommel has moved private member's notice of motion number 59. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mrs. Van Bommel, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mrs. Van Bommel: I bring this motion forward because of my concern that not all parties in this assembly continue to solidly support supply management in Ontario. The Liberal Party of Ontario is clearly on the record with its support of supply management as a domestic food policy that works for consumers, governments and farmers. We had all-party support for a motion presented by Minister Dombrowsky in December 2005, but since that time I have witnessed a weakening of the support by the federal Conservative government and serious attacks on supply management by a man who says he wants to help John Tory write his platform.

The McGuinty government understands that all three pillars of supply management have to work together in order to maintain a sustainable supply management system. The first pillar is the effective border controls that result in limited and predictable imports. The second pillar is pricing mechanisms that allow farmers to negotiate collectively and to set prices that create a fair return on their costs, labour and investments. The third pillar is farmers who exercise production disciplines that produce a supply of safe, high-quality food at levels that meet the needs of the Canadian market. The weakening of any of the three pillars will not be supported by the Liberal Party of Ontario.

Before I go any further, I want to explain to everyone who's listening just what supply management is. Chicken, broiler hatching eggs, turkey, eggs and dairy farms operate within the supply-managed or orderly marketing systems. Established in 1970, supply-managed commodities matched demand to supply. Prices paid to farmers are negotiated based on the cost of production. The prices result in predictable and steady income for farmers, while consumers are guaranteed consistent supply of top-quality product at a steady price. Producers must hold quota to be eligible to produce and market a supply-managed commodity. By forecasting the need for these commodities and planning accordingly, it reduces the instability that can result when supply and demand are out of balance. This system has served producers, processors and consumers very well for many years.

As a farmer, I naturally continue to follow the stance that our Canadian government is taking on the World Trade Organization trade talks. I was encouraged by the strong expression of support in the motion that was passed by the federal House of Commons on November 22, 2005. This was followed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's statement at the leaders' debate in 2006, in which he states: "Let me just outline some other things we'll do. We're going to continue to defend supply management in the international bodies and the three pillars of supply management. This is the one sector of agriculture that has actually been from time to time making a profit in the last few years."

You can imagine my angst and frustration when I read in the April issue of the Better Farming magazine an article entitled, "A Short-Lived 'Victory' For Supply Management."

"When MPs voted unanimously in 2005 to reject any WTO deal to limit supply management, its proponents cheered. Fifteen months later, things look rather different."

"On February 27, 2007, Conservative Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl and Trade Minister David Emerson made it clear to supply management interests that their 2005 victory was short-lived."

If a WTO deal happens, Strahl says Canada will sign. "It is inconceivable that we would walk away from the WTO, so take that as your first gospel truth." But the federal Conservative government continues to claim that they are strong proponents of supply management, and

farmers are left wondering if they are really walking the talk, or is it just pre-election noise?

While Agriculture Minister Strahl continues to repeat his support for supply management, we hear something completely different from Trade Minister David Emerson. At the year end, Minister Emerson was quoted as saying, "There is national interest that government should work with supply management, and with some modest support from government, we should transition to a globally competitive stature—or we're just going to have to go through a painful adjustment."

Wayne Easter, who is the Liberal agriculture critic and a farmer from PEI, stated in a press release on April 12, "The Conservatives have constantly changed their position on supply management.... It seems clear now that their announcement to enter into negotiations was nothing more than a pre-election ploy."

At the provincial level we hear from Randy Hillier, the past president and co-founder of the Lanark and Ontario Landowners Association, of his intent to seek the Progressive Conservative nomination this weekend in the riding of Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. He has declared in an interview his intention to help the Tories shape their platform, which he says has yet to be outlined: "Should I succeed, I will help shape that." From that, I have to assume that Mr. Hillier expects to help shape the Tory agriculture and rural platform.

Please note that on Mr. Hillier's website, you can find a page entitled What Randy Says, in which he addresses a freer marketing system and the disbanding of the present marketing board system for some commodities. He says, "I would challenge the statement, 'providing some economic stability for farmers'; we have seen in every commodity where there is a marketing board that there has been a decline in both the number of producers and also the amount produced." I don't understand this. He goes on to say, "Marketing boards are government-legislated monopolies...."

This is a statement that he repeats in the Ontario Landowners Association discussion paper, *Finding Profits on Canadian Farms*, which was written in March 2006. In that discussion paper, which is co-authored by Mr. Hillier, the following statement is made: "The cost of acquiring quota in supply-managed sectors has become prohibitive and prevents new farmers and farms from establishing themselves in these commodities.... The solution is to restore the principles of a free marketplace."

Mr. Hillier's argument that supply management discourages new entrants couldn't be further from the truth. My husband René and I bought our first broiler quota in 1991. At that time, we were told it was risky and too expensive. Today, we still operate a midsize poultry farm on 50 acres, and that has supported our family of seven very well. The start-up costs in supply management are no higher than the cost of land and equipment for a grains and oilseeds producer or buildings and land for other livestock farmers.

1110

The discussion paper goes on with comments and recommendations that include, "Supply-managed sectors

become optional and applicable only to those industries where the processors and producers agree to a buyer-seller contract-relationship. A marketing board or supply-managed sector contract cannot infringe upon those people and commodities that are not signatory to the contract." That's like saying it's optional to hold a Tim Hortons franchise if you want to sell Tim Hortons coffee. Another recommendation states, "Eliminate exclusive marketing rights and licensing. Re-establish 'free market principles.'"

In the April issue of the *Landowner* magazine, of which Mr. Hillier is co-author and co-publisher, an article appears that is entitled "An Udder Marketing Board Failure or Just a Consequence of Socialism?" It states, "Although Hershey's is mum on the exact reasons for relocating, the answers are very obvious. At the top of the list is the cost of production.... Canadian milk prices are determined by the [Dairy Farmers of Ontario] and are very likely to be far above what Hershey's will pay for milk at their new state-of-the-art facility in Mexico." Then it goes on to say, "Is the present marketing system managing the supply of milk or is it contributing to the demise of both farmers and processors?" But when you talk to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, they will inform you that Hershey's buys milk under a "special class" program that reduces the cost of milk to world price levels for further processors who must compete with imported food products.

There is no question of where Mr. Hillier stands on the matter of government support for supply management. And there is clearly going to be a conflict with the current agriculture critic, Toby Barrett, who stated in this Legislature, "Supply management ... has provided decades of business certainty for our chicken farmers and for our food system.... Supply management balances supply with demand. It prevents overproduction, flooded markets and depressed prices."

I look forward to hearing from other members of this Legislature on this issue. I hope that all parties are prepared to walk the talk and not just pronounce shallow platitudes intended to dupe farmers into a false sense of security. Let me assure you, farmers will not be fooled.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant): I'm certainly pleased to state—actually, to reiterate yet again—my unequivocal support for supply management, and support also coming from the entire Ontario PC caucus—that's 100%.

Supply management, as we know, has long been the strength of our poultry, egg and dairy farming in Canada, and any threat to the system must be seen as a threat to the well-being of rural Canada. I know what it was like before supply management. We had broilers; we had dairy. I had hatching eggs. We had laying hens. It was great work. We were losing too much money and, on the advice of the bank—we had actually gotten very, very large at that time—we had to get out. That was the reality for my family, and that's the reality of farming without

supply management. I can speak to that from the source. We cannot go back.

For these reasons, I'm proud to report on behalf of John Tory and the opposition caucus that our support for supply management is 100%. In fact, 100% of our sitting members have affixed their signature to support the FarmGate5 petition. It's a collective effort from the supply-managed sector attempting to seek balanced trade that benefits all farmers. It's not posted online yet, but our newest member, Joyce Savoline, has also affixed her signature.

As we heard this morning, supply management works on three pillars: import controls, of course; producer pricing; and production discipline. Like any three-legged stool, if one pillar is weakened, the entire system is weakened. For instance, without import controls, production discipline becomes impossible. Without production discipline, pricing becomes impossible. Supply management does balance supply and demand and prevents over-production, obviously, flooded markets and depressed prices.

Here's a good example: Look what happened to the tobacco farmers without the support of this government, when you see one of the legs on that stool weakened.

I'm very disappointed to see the divisions within Dalton McGuinty's Liberal caucus with respect to supply management. How can farmers trust the Dalton McGuinty government to defend supply management when Dalton McGuinty cannot get his own MPPs to sign that FarmGate5 petition? In fact, there's a list circulating today: 28 Liberal MPPs have not signed on to supply management. Check the website.

We've seen the shameful record of this government when it comes to not only agriculture but rural Ontario in general. I quote the environment minister from yesterday: "Stop raising issues in rural Ontario." It's in Hansard. I listened when she said it. Check back in Hansard. Is this government so weak on rural policy that they now want to declare it out of bounds? My suggestion is, move to the city if you want to be heard in this Ontario Legislature under this present government.

To conclude—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford seems to be able to yell out. I'm able to hear the speaker up to this point, but I would remind members that we have to realize that the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has the floor.

Mr. Barrett: Just to wrap up, Speaker, I do want to condemn the ongoing cuts to our ag budget. We're aware of that reduction of \$191 million in planned funding in this present projection for the ag budget.

I'd like to quote an Ontario Federation of Agriculture newsletter from yesterday: "Minister Strahl Makes Spring Much Brighter.

"Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Strahl made spring much brighter for a lot of Canadian farmers when he announced Monday, May 1, that the \$400 million in cost-of-production payments will begin to flow to

eligible farmers next month." The OFA goes on to say, "Our next challenge will be to get provincial OMAFRA minister Dombrowsky to announce that Ontario will be adding its 40% contribution to the payment."

According to the OFA, producers of non-supply-managed commodities for tax purposes for 2004 are eligible for this payment. That's the reality. The feds are ponying up. Minister Dombrowsky took her chainsaw to that budget, and we would await an announcement on that 40%. I say to the minister, don't let your Liberal colleagues convince you to abandon supply management, and please pony up the \$46 million owing to Ontario farmers.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has introduced another motion—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Come on. We want to keep the debate and even the heckling at some level of decorum. Please.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I heard that remark, and I would ask the Minister of Agriculture to withdraw that. Addressing another member of this Legislature—

The Deputy Speaker: Would the minister withdraw?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Withdraw what?

Mr. Yakabuski: The Speaker heard you, so he already raised it. So that's up to you.

Interjection.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I withdraw.

Mr. Yakabuski: She has to stand up and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Who's running this—you or me? I heard the word "withdraw."

Member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant—Toronto-Danforth.

Mr. Tabuns: I know people see me everywhere, but it's Toronto-Danforth.

The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has put an interesting issue before us, just as previously she brought forth the whole issue of electrical leakage, which I thought was—

Interjection.

Mr. Tabuns: Stray voltage. Thank you. I thought that was a very useful debate, very useful for me.

I disagree with her government's position, but I'm glad that she has put the issue on the table.

There's no question that, provincially and federally, the NDP is committed to protecting Ontario's supply management systems. Ontario's supply-managed sectors are the financial backbone of our farm communities. We need to strengthen them, not weaken them through misguided international trade negotiations.

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I have to say there that are elements that relate to food security and the stability of our economy, as well as the

environment, that play into this. Right now we import food from thousands of kilometres away. In talking to retailers, I know that having locked into supply from California, it's very difficult for them to actually bring in Ontario produce, because their suppliers say, "We supply you 10 months of the year. If you don't take from us for those other two months, for the full year, we're not that interested in you."

We need to have a very vital, very strong agricultural sector in this province so that we can supply as much of our food as possible, so we reduce our imports and reduce our environmental impact. A country also needs to be able to feed itself, and we have very talented, very capable farmers. We have good farmland. We have all the resources necessary to have a vibrant farm sector.

What we need on top of that is government policy that actually reinforces those farmers, that gives them the tools to allow them to produce food for us and produce an income for themselves. Now we, as I have said, support the protection of our supply management system and the expansion of our five supply-managed products as represented by the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the Ontario Egg Producers, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the Ontario Turkey Producers' Marketing Board and the Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission.

As we know, though, other sectors in Ontario agriculture are not afforded the same level of stability associated with supply management. The grains and oilseeds sector and livestock producers, such as the beef industry, have both been decimated in recent years because of unfair trade practices outside of our borders. Has this government, have the McGuinty Liberals, introduced resolutions for debate about the crisis in the grains and oilseeds sector? The answer, simply, is no; we haven't seen this government speak out and act to protect those sectors. Yet, when Dalton McGuinty was drafting his 2003 election platform, he saw fit to promise Ontario farmers "a new generation of farm safety nets and companion programs."

So one has to ask: "Where are they?" Where is the protection for the agricultural sector? Where is the protection for the farmers, whom we need to ensure that we have a secure food supply, whom we need to produce food locally so that we don't have to import from thousands of kilometres away? We've seen the decimation of the grains and oilseeds farmers in their communities across the province—from the Ottawa Valley down to the borders of Windsor. Did Dalton McGuinty introduce a long-term income stabilization program for grain and oilseeds farmers? Nope. Not a chance; not on his agenda; not on the agenda here in this Legislature, not even as a private member's bill. We're not seeing this government move forward on those sectors.

Farmers are resourceful people, they're optimistic people, and they're people who think about how to actually deal practically with the problems that come before them. They've developed a risk management program to provide some stabilization to farm incomes in the grains and oilseeds sector, yet the McGuinty Liberals

would have no part of it. They didn't adopt it; they didn't take it on. And so, in that sector, farmers who deserve as much support as they do in the current supply-managed sectors are left to their own devices.

Does this sound like a government concerned about farmers, about rural Ontario and food sovereignty? Unfortunately not. Instead of developing a long-term plan for stabilizing farm incomes in the grains and oilseeds sector, which was called for by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the National Farmers Union, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal members, in December, were busy voting themselves a 31% pay increase.

We have heard this morning, and we've heard for a number of days, from time to time members of the governing party of Liberals saying, "Why don't you comment on our budget? Why don't you ask us questions about our budget? It's the greatest budget since sliced bread was first introduced to humanity." I have to point out that the director of the National Farmers Union—Ontario, Grant Robertson, had this to say in a press release after agriculture came up short, once again, in the 2007 McGuinty budget.

Interjection.

Mr. Tabuns: I'm glad I was asked: "What did the president say?" Grant Robertson said, "A huge salary increase for MPPs was a priority before Christmas, but those who produced the food for Christmas dinner are still left struggling." I'd say that the director has got it right. He goes on: "Ontario families care about where their food comes from. They want to know that the family farmers who produce their food do not have to subsidize their grocery bill with off-farm jobs." We know very well that farmer after farmer keeps their farm alive because they have a full-time job somewhere else. That's how they essentially subsidize food production in Ontario.

Mr. Robertson, director of the National Farmers Union—Ontario, goes on to characterize the plight of the family farm under the McGuinty government. He said: "Family farmers are facing the worst five years of realized net income on record. Farmers and their organizations have provided many possible solutions to address the issues for different sectors, such as the risk management plan, but instead of helping move farmers towards greater financial stability and sustainability, this government has in fact cut real dollars from the agriculture budget in Ontario. Talk about kicking someone when they are down." That was Grant Robertson, director of the National Farmers Union—Ontario.

I have to ask this government, which has constantly said, "Come back to the budget," so what did they do? Did they help these farmers? Well, I'll tell you. In the eyes of the director of the National Farmers Union—Ontario, nope, they didn't. The farmers were left struggling. The government cared little or nothing about them. It's spending a lot of time attacking Randy Hillier. Fair enough, but why don't you take action on the real issues that are driving the crisis in rural communities? Not seeing it. The National Farmers Union also tells us that

since fiscal year 2003-04, agricultural spending has now been reduced in real dollars by 10%. Does that sound like the actions of a government that puts the needs of farmers in rural Ontario at the front of the line? No, not a bit.

When the government and its members ask us, ask the opposition, ask the third party and ask others, "Why aren't you talking about the budget?" I have to ask, do they really want a discussion about that budget? Do they really want that discussion? Because part of the reason that there are no questions is that there was so little substance, so little dealt with—essentially a status quo budget—that, what's to ask? It's clear. This was a budget that didn't move Ontario forward, didn't deal with these issues and has not been well received. This is not a budget that is going to keep them in good shape this coming fall. It will be ignored or attacked. I don't think you're going to see a lot of praise.

The National Farmers Union says that the 2007 budget is going to see more cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and they want to know where these cuts are going to take place and what programming might be affected.

In many ways it reminds me of the recent report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario talking about the fact that the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment are underresourced to the point that they cannot actually deliver on the mandate they have been given. They cannot do the work they're supposed to do. With regard to the environment, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario said that the lack of resources puts Ontario's environment at risk of catastrophic events—his words. That has not been corrected. It is not on the agenda to be corrected by this government.

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Under the McGuinty government, farmers and farm communities across the province have seen farm income plummet to unprecedented levels. More and more farmers have been driven into bankruptcy, forced to hold full-time jobs off the farm or both.

The McGuinty government promised a new generation of safety nets but delivered only old Band-Aid measures while Ontario farmers and farm communities lurched through crisis. There is no leadership in the farm income crisis, no long-term income stabilization for grain and oilseed producers; that is the tragic record of the McGuinty government on agriculture in Ontario.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to the motion that my colleague the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has brought before this Legislature, a very important one. She's a very strong advocate for agriculture and certainly the supply-managed sectors. I think it's important that in this Legislature we appreciate what supply management means for the people in Ontario.

Four decades ago, Ontario's poultry farmers were struggling. They were losing their farms and, at the same time, their product was increasing in value. The intro-

duction of supply management in 1965 marked a turning point in the poultry industry, and today that industry provides more than 5,000 full-time jobs, with related jobs employing more than 1,000 people. Under supply management, Ontario dairy producers have thrived as well, and dairy now represents the largest sector in this province's agriculture industry, with clear and crucial benefits to our economy. The story is the same for our egg producers and pullet growers. That is why Ontario is not prepared to sacrifice the regulated marketing structures used by dairy, poultry and egg producers.

I was very happy on December 12, 2005, to introduce a motion in this Legislature to support supply management. It was very important that the motion was passed, and I'm pleased as well to reflect that history will record that it was supported unanimously by all members of this Legislature. It was a motion I was able to carry with me when I attended the World Trade Organization talks in Hong Kong. I was able to very strongly stand in my place as an advocate for farmers in Ontario and say that the people of Ontario wholeheartedly supported supply management.

In Ontario during the year 2006, approximately 6,500 farms and 250 hatcheries and poultry and egg-producing facilities were in the supply-managed sector. This activity generated \$2.4 billion in farm gate receipts, or close to 28% of all farm cash receipts in the province, and roughly 50,000 jobs are related to this sector.

So I think that it's very clear why it is so important that we in this Legislature, as legislators, as elected representatives, do all that we can and stand and speak clearly in support of this very important system we have in place that supports our agriculture industry.

I would say, however, that I am concerned, as my colleague has already identified, that there are some factions in the province that have been working very hard to do all they can to find a chink in that armour and have suggested that the government would have a role to play in dismantling that. Of course, I am speaking about the Ontario Landowners Association. I have here a document that was produced in March 2006. Randy Hillier, I understand, is one of the authors of the principles that are presented here. It does refer to supply management and it talks about the cost of acquiring quota in supply-managed sectors, that it has become prohibitive and it prevents new farmers and farms from establishing themselves in these commodities. The solution is to restore the principles of a free marketplace, the same principles that all other Canadian industries enjoy and that are non-existent in Canadian agriculture.

The document goes on. Mr. Hillier has identified that, "Supply-managed sectors become optional and applicable only to those industries where the processors and producers agree to a buyer-seller contract" for supply management. "A marketing board or supply-managed sector contract cannot infringe upon those people and commodities that are not a signatory to the contract." It also goes on to say that we should eliminate exclusive marketing rights and licensing and re-establish free market principles.

That's from the Ontario Landowners Association document, 2006. One of the authors of this was Mr. Randy Hillier, who I believe is looking to be the Conservative candidate in the next provincial election for the riding of Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Interjection.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: My colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant posed a question, and I would just like to pose the question right back and ask: How can farmers in Ontario trust the members of the opposition when they are lining up with members of the Ontario Landowners Association, and lining up in a very substantive way? Someone provided me with a copy of the Landowner, a document that is published by the Ontario Landowners Association, and who has an ad in that? Toby Barrett, MPP for Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant, advertises in the Landowner.

Obviously, I think the farmers of Ontario need to be very aware that when it comes to support for supply management, members of the opposition stand in their places in this House and say one thing, but they're obviously very supportive of other individuals who would very clearly not be in support of supply management. That is something that I think farmers in Ontario are aware of, have taken note of and will remember at the appropriate time.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise to speak in support of the resolution from the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. Having said that, I think it's rather interesting that the member would bring this forward. It must be because we're getting close to an election. Obviously the Liberal government, the McGuinty government, has left the farmers and the agricultural community behind for three and a half years, and this is like a conversion on the road to Damascus. Now, all of a sudden, they're going to come forward with a proposal that will hopefully make the farmers of Ontario change their mind about the government and say, "My gosh, I do believe they support it."

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, member for Huron—Bruce.

Mr. Hardeman: I would just tell the member, I don't think this resolution is going to change the opinion of the farmers. On the narrowness of this resolution, I want to say I strongly support supply management personally, and I'm sure that the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex does too, because she does represent an area with a lot of farmers who have supply-managed commodities, as do I. In fact, I think my riding may be one of the highest in the province of Ontario with supply-managed commodities.

Interjection.

Mr. Hardeman: No, you don't have as many milk producers in your riding.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Oxford, take your seat. I'll remind you once again that the member for Oxford has the floor. I will also remind the member for

Oxford that you don't speak across the floor; you speak through the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Hardeman: I just want to say that I would hope the provincial government is as supportive of supply management as the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex is. I can understand why she would introduce this resolution, because as was mentioned previously, FarmGate5, which is the organization that represents all supply-managed commodities in Ontario, asked members of this Legislature to support their cause, to get them to sign. Of the John Tory PCs in this Legislature, every member of the party signed it, because we are strongly in support of supply management. The problem is that there were some 28 members of the government who had not signed supply management. One in particular that bothers me somewhat—and I think my farmers in Oxford are very concerned—is the Minister of Finance, the chair of the re-election committee for the Liberal Party, who did not sign in support of supply management in the province of Ontario. I wonder if there's any significance to the fact that the member would bring this forward. I think she is concerned that she may wake up some morning and the Minister of Finance, the chair of the election committee for the Liberal Party, will say, "Maybe we should trade that off for something else." That's why I support this resolution and I also support the member for bringing it forward.

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I know there was some concern on the government side when I started my presentation by saying that they have left the farmers behind. In 2003-04, the Minister of Agriculture signed an agricultural policy framework. At the time, I had the opportunity to ask him some questions about it and to ask why he would sign it, and he said, "Well, you couldn't get that done. I got it done." I said, "But, Minister, it's not good for the farmers," and he said, "Well, you couldn't get it done." I said to him then—this is right out of the Hansard of April 7—and I'll say it to the minister today, "I want to point out that the reason Helen Johns, the minister of the day, did not sign the agreement was because the total farm community said, 'Don't sign the agreement, because it's not a good deal for Ontario's farmers.'"

It took three years and question after question and answer after answer defending the CAIS program, and, lo and behold, two days ago the federal auditor said that the program does not work for Ontario farmers. It's too heavy on bureaucracy, too heavy on paperwork, and the program is more interested in making sure that farmers pay back overpayment than worrying about farmers getting their payment. That's what the auditor said, and that's a sign of what the Liberal government believes they should do for Ontario's farmers. The reason I mention the CAIS program is because it's so important. That's the only hope the non-supply-managed sector in agriculture has, and this government has badly let them down.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South—Weston): I'm pleased to speak ever so briefly to this motion brought

forward by the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Following my maiden speech in this place, she and I had a brief conversation, and she talked about her own farming background. I know how important this issue is to all of the constituents in her riding, and I commend her for bringing it forward.

It may surprise the members here that, coming from York South–Weston, an urban riding—there aren't any farms in my riding. But I do want to talk about a very important institution in my riding that affects farmers of this province in a very profound way, and that is the Weston Farmers' Market, which draws farmers from across this province, including a couple from the riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who come every Saturday from May to November. I hang out there on Saturday mornings and I speak to my constituents, and I speak to those farmers and talk about the issues and concerns that they have and the challenges that they face on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis in trying to keep their family farm operations going.

Unfortunately, this government has let the agricultural sector down. My friend from Toronto–Danforth talked about some of the ways that this government has let them down in their budgetary processes, where they have shortchanged the agricultural sector. I want to raise another way, and that is specifically regarding farmers' markets.

In the province of Ontario, we have more than 120 farmers' markets operating now. According to some figures that I read through Farmers' Markets Ontario, 27,000 people in this province are directly involved in working in delivering and providing goods at these farmers' markets, and it has a direct economic impact of \$600 million. So I say to this government, let's work to make the opportunities, the processes that affect farmers' markets in my community and others, easier—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I rise today to show my very strong support for the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and to support supply management.

I know that from the other side of the House there have been some questions raised about why this is coming forward at this time, so let me talk about that.

I know that among my agricultural community there is concern. I want to directly quote Adrian Measner, the former president and CEO of the Canadian Wheat Board. He was in Huron–Bruce recently, telling farmers that if the federal Conservative government is successful in disbanding the wheat board, then supply management will be next. Amongst my farming community there is a concern that if the wheat board goes that way, what then is the future for supply management?

To put this into context, I want to give a brief synopsis of what that means to the riding of Huron–Bruce. I can tell every member in the House today that that will create economic hardship that we have not seen the likes of. I can remember when we did not have supply management in my riding, and those were tough times. I know that part of our agricultural community sector, the grains and

oilseeds, are struggling, but I can tell you, my friends in this House, that the supply-managed sector works, and why it works.

Let's talk about what's produced in the most beautiful riding in the province of Ontario. Within the dairy industry, 200 million litres in Huron–Bruce, and 375 dairy farmers. Chicken farmers: 177 in Huron–Bruce; 65 million kilograms produced. Ontario egg producers: 71; 2.1 million birds. Ontario turkey: 13 in Huron–Bruce; 6.85 million kilograms. When I think about the level of produce that is coming out of the riding of Huron–Bruce, the numbers are incredible. You can see the economic stability it provides. I can honestly say to you, as I say to my agricultural community, that the McGuinty government understands the communities coming forward. What we have to do is to focus on the product grown in Ontario, and obviously the bulk of it will be grown in my riding of Huron–Bruce.

I also took the opportunity this summer to do round table discussions about agriculture and what people see for the future of agriculture. From the survey and the round-table discussions, 93% of the people in the riding of Huron–Bruce support seeing an expansion of Ontario-grown product. The consumer believes, and rightly so, that our product is safe, and believes in the quality of the product as well. This is one of the pillars of supply management: the quality of food, the safety, and also the quantities that are produced. That system is already in place, and 93% of the people want to see a further expansion of Ontario-grown product. That is why \$10 million has been allocated to talk about the Ontario brand, because we know the consumer wants to be assured that the safety of their food allows them the capability to maximize their own personal health. We understand that that is a component of their overall health.

So when I talk about what we can do as a government and the concerns that are being raised within my community—and we know the way the wheat board has gone: no consultation; it just went forward. When things were happening within the board that the Harper government saw as not fit in moving in the direction that they went, so went the CEO of the board. We know how fragile that linkage can be when we get into national trade talks. So I ask the members from across the way what we can do to strengthen supply management and speak with a united voice. It's for the betterment of all people of Ontario, and we understand that. That's why this side of the House strongly endorses moving forward with a supply-managed sector.

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Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to stand and support the resolution from the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. As you know, every member of our caucus has signed on to FarmGate 5 in support of supply management, which directly contradicts the silly question of the member for Nipissing yesterday, clearly stating that I was opposed to supply management. So again, just to point out that she was wrong.

I see the Minister of Agriculture. I wanted to talk about her answer to that question, saying I didn't support

the people in my riding. I have here a letter that I sent to OMAFRA with regard to the Klaesi brothers' anaerobic digester in their riding. So if she knew what was going on in her own ministry, she might understand. They seem to be more worried about what other people are doing than themselves.

In fact, with respect to the minister, I wanted to say that this past summer we had a terrible tornado hit both our ridings; most of the damage was in my riding but some of it was in the Minister of Agriculture's riding. I got calls from people in her riding to come and see them. I wasn't only looking after people in my riding; I went to see people in her riding. In fact, I had the courtesy, as a member of this House, to call her directly, personally, to bring that issue to her attention. I followed up with those people in her riding.

I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture: When did you go to look at the people in your riding and see the damage before you attack another—

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Renfrew, will you take your seat. The Speaker took some time, I believe it was yesterday, to speak to this issue, that you speak in the third person, please.

Mr. Yakabuski: I did say "the minister."

The Deputy Speaker: But you said "you."

Mr. Yakabuski: Sorry. I'd like to know, maybe the minister could tell us, when, after that tornado, she went up to visit the devastation in her riding, as opposed to me, your neighbouring member, going to look after your constituents. So shame on you for attacking me for not serving my constituents in this House yesterday.

I just wanted to point out to the member that 28 members of her caucus have failed to sign FarmGate 5—28 members of your caucus, member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Let me see if I've got the ridings, because I wouldn't want to get in trouble. Oh, yes: London-Fanshawe; Don Valley East, a minister; Thornhill; Kingston and the Islands, a minister; Windsor-St. Clair, a minister; Etobicoke North; St. Paul's—hello, Minister; Scarborough-Agincourt, a minister; Sault Ste. Marie; Scarborough East, a minister; Vaughan-King-Aurora, the Minister of Finance; Ottawa-Vanier, a minister; Mississauga Centre; Windsor West; Kitchener Centre; York Centre; Markham; Eglinton-Lawrence; Hamilton Mountain; Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Timiskaming-Cochrane; Davenport; Thunder Bay-Superior North; Ottawa Centre; Scarborough Southwest; Brampton West-Mississauga; Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh; and Scarborough-Rouge River.

As the House leader said yesterday—he liked to quote the Bible—"Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." I could say to those folks across the way, they would do well to listen to their House leader, Mr. Bradley.

I just wanted to clarify once and for all our support and my support for supply management in the province of Ontario. Every agricultural organization in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has met with me on

this very subject. Let me assure you, when members, like the member for Nipissing, who clearly is in trouble, who clearly is desperate, make statements like that in the House about another member that are absolutely and completely, totally inaccurate, that in fact diminishes this great institution and all of those people who have come here before us.

I will tell you this much, Mr. Speaker: In fairness, the member who came here before me, Mr. Conway, would never have engaged in that kind of ad hominem attack on another member of this Legislature. I can say this to the House leader—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Yakabuski:—that when he was being grilled in the press in my riding and they called me, you know what I said to the press? I said, "I know that man"—I won't use the minister's name—"and I know he would not have done that." I defended him in the press in my riding. You know what? He was man enough to come to me the next week and say, "I read what you said in the paper. I appreciate that." There is a higher level that we can rise to debate to in this place, other than ad hominem attacks on other members.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for St. Paul's, come to order.

Further debate.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm really proud of the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. She obviously gets it and understands that we need to stand with our rural and agricultural sector. Thank you very much for your passion and your enthusiasm.

I think it's incumbent on all of us to seek to understand and to respond as best we can to the needs of our farm families. That's why, as a member of the Legislative Assembly, I attempt to get to every single meeting of the Hamilton-Wentworth Federation of Agriculture in my riding. That's why I was proud to help draft the December 2005 resolution on supply-side management. That's why I was pleased to sign on to FarmGate5 and to give advice to the FarmGate5 group, the grain and oilseeds folk, as well as many other agricultural stakeholders who have a real concern about where the agricultural sector is going. That's why I was pleased to be able to organize five different round-table discussions with key farm leaders and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. That's why I was pleased to fight and to continue to fight for new monies in support of the agricultural sector and to be an unabashed and very strong advocate for an extension of rural infrastructure from \$70 million—the doubling to \$140 million, and the whole issue of farm markets, "Buy Ontario," and my private member's resolution—

Interjection.

Mr. McMeekin:—thank you—respecting the need for a co-operative economic development secretariat. We need to be standing in defence. We need to defend and extend whatever advantages our agricultural sector has.

Certainly, the supply-side nature of agriculture tends to stabilize income and ensure a stable supply of products.

It all ties into food sovereignty as well. We're told by UN reports that we're not going to be able to rely, down the road, as much on markets, so we need to be growing more of our food at home. Both senior levels of government need to come to a radical understanding of the importance of food sovereignty and the ability to grow, market and distribute our own food in this country.

I stand as an unabashed advocate for this particular motion and for the supply-side nature of this economy. I'm pleased to support the wonderful resolution placed by the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): There's only one question that will be resolved here: Who's driving the bus over on the other side of the House in regard to the Progressive Conservative caucus? Is it Prime Minister Harper and Minister Emerson, who seem to be flip-flopping about their support of supply management? Is it a certain member of the Lanark, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Progressive Conservative Party, one Randy Hillier, who wants to set your policy? Or is it all of us defending supply management? Stay tuned for the vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Mrs. Van Bommel, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Van Bommel: I just want to say how very important it is for this entire House and for all the members to support agriculture and our supply-managed commodities. I want to thank everyone who spoke on this.

During these times of international uncertainty about imported food and food additives, Canadians can take pride in the fact that they have a bountiful and secure supply of safe, nutritious and reasonably priced products. They can feel secure that it's produced here at home by people they trust. Supply management offers Canadian consumers stable prices and a steady supply of safe, made-in-Canada food that also provides a decent living for dairy, poultry and egg farmers without relying on taxpayer-funded subsidies. Supply management provides economic growth and prosperity. We support our rural businesses, including feed mills and equipment dealers. Supply management supports small and medium-sized farms, because our cost-of-production formula gives farm families predictable incomes without the need to intensify the size of their farm operations.

I am proud to say that the McGuinty government believes in a balanced approach to the WTO trade negotiations and that Canada does not have to trade away its right to successful domestic food policy supported by supply management in order to achieve our other goal of increased access to export-oriented commodities.

I hope that by supporting this motion, we will have a strong reaffirmation of our unwavering support of supply management by all members of this House and send a strong message to Ontario farmers about our commitment to their needs. It is important that the government of Ontario, where the majority of supply-managed commodities are produced, send this message to the federal gov-

ernment. These are serious times for supply management, as farmers look for the strong and concrete commitment of their government to the future of their sector of agriculture. I want to thank everyone for their support—

Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to take the time to acknowledge the presence of two of my constituents who have joined us for an enlightening debate this morning: Bob Ghosh and Sarah Hoffman.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said that the member for St. Paul's was not listed as a supporter for FarmGate5. I'm sure he will want to correct the record. He may have old information, because in fact—

Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

JOB PROTECTION COMMISSIONER ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE COMMISSAIRE À LA PROTECTION DES EMPLOIS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr. Hampton. Mr. Hampton has moved second reading of Bill 126. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It's carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, Bill 126 will go to the committee of the whole House unless Mr. Hampton—

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Hampton has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 5, standing in the name of Mrs. Van Bommel. Mrs. Van Bommel has moved member's notice of motion number 59. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Arthurs, Wayne	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Balkissoon, Bas	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
Bryant, Michael	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.
Ferreira, Paul	Milloy, John	Tabuns, Peter
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Van Bommel, Maria
Hoy, Pat	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilkinson, John
Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael	Wilson, Jim
Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq	Yakabuski, John
Kormos, Peter	Racco, Mario G.	Zimmer, David

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Last week, federal Environment Minister John Baird was “Gored” by Al and run over by a Suzuki as he brought in his less-than-intense climate change plan.

Climate change is a very important issue that we must take seriously. Ted Scambos, a glaciologist, says that the Arctic ice cap is melting faster than forecasted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The Arctic Ocean could be relatively free of ice as soon as 2020, not 2050 as predicted by the IPCC.

In the next five years alone, increases of greenhouse gases in Alberta’s oil sands will more than offset the benefits of closing down Ontario’s coal-fired generation plants, which is a tough undertaking for our province but one that we must make. To date, we have reduced emissions from that source by 30% and we remain committed to closing the coal plants. Our recent budget also included funding for many environmental initiatives, including \$150 rebates for homeowners who get home energy audits.

I was very proud to hear this week that our government, led by Premier McGuinty, held discussions with other provinces to develop our own national plan to address how we can all work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This meeting is an example of government at its best: leaders who come together to discuss constructive solutions—and real solutions—to environmental challenges. This is a much better solution than intensity-based targets which allow emissions to grow with increased production.

I would like to congratulate our leader, Premier McGuinty, for showing true leadership for our country, our province and our environment.

CABINET MINISTERS

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Over the last few weeks, this House has witnessed Liberal ministers repeatedly defending their indefensible actions. We have seen ministers refuse to accept any accountability for the failure of their policies.

What has become clear is that this issue is much bigger than the failures of individual ministers. The real problem is the Premier’s complete absence of standards for his ministers. Minister Takhar’s censure by the Integrity Commissioner does not violate the Premier’s standards. Minister Caplan’s failure to deal with Lottogate does not violate the Premier’s standards. And now, Minister Colle’s handouts to groups that are little more than Liberal Party fronts do not violate the Premier’s standards.

The Premier prides himself on never having lost a minister. This is because he sets his standards so low as to be meaningless. That’s why he won’t lose a minister. Previous Premiers lost ministers because they held them to standards. Harris, Rae, Peterson and Davis held their ministers accountable and lost some of them. When it comes to his ministers, this Premier is more interested in maintaining a perfect record than a clean record.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

All matters relating to private members’ public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1211 to 1330.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): We’re still waiting. We’re waiting for Dalton McGuinty to do the right thing and apologize. There has been an effort to smear the opposition parties. We believe it started at the top, and we are waiting for an apology.

Dalton McGuinty knows that his government made a mistake. His government gave out grants without any controls or applications. They wrote cheques first and asked questions later. He has pulled good organizations into his political scandal. He doesn’t have a defence, so he’s trying to distract everyone by leading a smear campaign and personal attacks against the opposition parties. From here, it looks like Dalton McGuinty is getting desperate. It looks like we hit a nerve.

Yesterday, Christina Blizzard in her column pointed out that some ethnic and cultural groups didn’t receive any funding. Are they going to start making accusations against her too?

Anyone who knows John Tory knows that those accusations are false. The people of Ontario won’t buy it. Dalton McGuinty should apologize to both opposition parties and then call in the auditor to clean up this mess.

As Christina Blizzard said in her article, “Unlike its toothpaste namesake, though, this Collegate leaves a bad taste in your mouth.” So do the actions of the Premier. Dalton should do the right thing: be a leader, admit he is wrong, stop the smear campaign, tell the Legislature and the people of Ontario the truth about the slush funds and try to get his integrity back. We’re all anxiously waiting.

ANNIVERSARY OF POLISH CONSTITUTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I'd like to begin by introducing some members of the Canadian-Polish Foundation. They're sitting in our gallery: Marek Goldyn, founder and chairman; Mathew Syrokomla, the first vice-chairman; Danuta Lechowska-Czarnik and Georgina Bencsik. Welcome to the House.

Today, Canadians of Polish descent are celebrating the proclamation of the Polish constitution 216 years ago, on May 3, 1791. This constitution is Europe's first modern codified constitution and the second-oldest in the world.

In 1772, Russia, Austria and Prussia signed the First Partition treaty of Poland. This was a short-lived constitution and did not save the country from two other partitions which blotted Poland from the maps. During the Communist period, especially the Solidarity revolution, May 3 was a day of anti-government and anti-Communist protests. Polish Canadians celebrate May 3 as a symbol of their freedom from foreign occupation, of national unity, and a symbol of hope that "Poland has not perished" but lives on in their minds and hearts.

I'd like all the members of the House to congratulate our Polish members here today on this glorious day.

VAN BOMMEL FAMILY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): On May 5, 1957, Martin and Cornelia Van Bommel landed at pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with 10 of their children. They ranged in age from two to 24. The Dutch family was among the fifth-largest ethnic group to pass through pier 21. They had already travelled 10 days across the Atlantic from Holland on a large passenger ship called the Maasdam, when they boarded a train for a two-day trip to London, Ontario, where their eldest son, Harry, met them.

Martin was 54 years old when he made the biggest decision of his life. Having survived two world wars, he knew that his children would have a better future in a country called Canada, so he sold his farm and left everything he had ever known for a new country, a new language and new culture.

From London, they went on to Blenheim, where another Dutch family, the De Brouwers, had sponsored them. They were proud to become Canadian farmers, so 10 months later they bought their first farm in Ridgetown. In 1965, they moved to another farm at Belmont, Ontario, where they lived out their final days. Altogether they had 15 children, 48 grandchildren and 77 great-grandchildren. Most of the family are farmers, and they have a teacher and a mechanic to fill out their successes.

The occasion is being marked with the installation of a commemorative plaque at pier 21 in Halifax and a visit to Queen's Park today, all decked out in the family uniform. The family wishes to thank Canada and Ontario for all the opportunities they have been given by this great country and this great province.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise in the House to call attention to the fact that the Minister of Finance so far has managed to dodge the growing clouds around the Collegate scandal. But we in the opposition suspected that while Mike Colle was the workhorse in all of this, Greg Sorbara, the finance minister, is the real thoroughbred. In fact, the finance minister has really completed a triple crown when it comes to the Collegate scandal.

First, as the Minister of Finance, he dished out some \$32 million for this end-of-year Liberal slush fund; then, as the Chair of Management Board, I guess he would have approved the list, as Mr. Colle had indicated, of which groups would get the projects and which with Liberal ties would get preferential treatment; and then finally, as the chair of the Liberal campaign fund, he was able to shake hands with the local candidates and local Liberal Party presidents—

Interjection: Cheque in hand.

Mr. Hudak: —cheque in hand as they went through the shopping list for lawn signs and brochures and such.

We know that the Minister of Citizenship told reporters that Mr. Sorbara, the finance minister, and the public infrastructure renewal minister, David Caplan, were in charge of the purse strings and therefore helped approve the grants. We look forward to the TSN highlight of the night as the minister, as chair of the Liberal campaign fund, as Chair of Management Board and as the finance minister doling out the slush, comes home with a triple crown of accomplishments in the Mike Collegate affair.

1340

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I rise today to speak to the positive health care results the McGuinty government is delivering. It is truly unfortunate that the member for York South–Weston is not raising an important issue for his constituents. You might say he has been missing in action on this file. But I'm happy to take this opportunity to share some of the good news with the people of York South–Weston.

In my riding, my constituents are benefiting from the positive investments we have made after years of neglect under the previous two governments: a \$268.4-million increase in funding for 905/GTA hospitals since 2003; just over \$74 million in wait-times funding; and development of three regional cancer centres, two cardiac surgery programs and five regional dialysis programs.

It is really too bad that the member from York South–Weston won't tell his constituents about the positive things happening in their community. It is disappointing that the NDP can find the time to oppose a much-needed subway extension to York University. I'm happy to make sure that the member from York South–Weston's constituents have a voice in this Legislature.

We are moving forward with the subway, and here's more great news for the people living in York South-Weston: Let's not forget the new state-of-the-art Humber River Regional Hospital and redevelopment of one of the hospital's existing ambulatory care services as part of a major cancer funding announcement—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Members' statements.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I rise in the House today to share some important initiatives on community safety in the GTA and York South-Weston in the absence of the member for York South-Weston standing up to share the news with his own constituents.

The McGuinty government is bringing a tough-on-crime-and-its-causes approach to community safety. The strategy involves additional funding for community programs, officers and task forces to combat gangs, guns and drugs.

After the NDP's social contract cut the number of police officers on our streets and the Tory government cut funding for the Ministry of Community Safety by \$181 million, this government knew we had to turn things around. As a result, we've invested in making our streets safer. This includes funding for an additional 1,000 police officers, 250 of whom are right here in Toronto.

The McGuinty government's approach to community safety does more than just increase the number of police on our streets; it also invests in at-risk youth and rehabilitation programming for young offenders.

Communities like Weston and Mount Dennis have directly benefited from our funding. Youth-centric programs like the For Youth Initiative, UrbanArts and the Black Action Defence Committee aim to engage youth in activities that develop strong leadership and creative skills.

The NDP still has no plan, while the McGuinty government continues to move forward, with real results. We know there is more to do, but we are committed to keeping our streets and our communities safer.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased to share some good news with the people of Toronto. Since NDP members like the members from York South-Weston and Parkdale-High Park haven't taken the opportunity to give their constituents a voice, I'm happy to help them out.

There's a lot of good news for public transportation in Ontario. We're especially excited to be fully committed to the extension of the subway line to York University. Despite the NDP leader's efforts to foil a tri-government

agreement to help improve Toronto's subway system, we're moving forward.

In the GTA alone, we've invested \$1.8 billion in public transit since coming to office—the largest investment in over a decade.

While our government has made public transportation a priority by putting money on the table for the York subway line, the leader of the NDP and his caucus, including the members from York South-Weston and Parkdale-High Park, would like to derail the project. That would have a devastating impact on commuters and students living in the GTA, not to mention the negative impact on good-paying CAW jobs in the north.

It's no surprise that his caucus sat silent on this. They must be embarrassed by their leader, who's against extending the Toronto subway and against CAW workers and against good-paying jobs in the north.

We refuse to play politics with major issues like our public transportation system, especially on critical jobs in northern Ontario. I hope the NDP caucus members will take the opportunity to give their constituents a voice, because it's clear that the NDP leader is not speaking for Torontonians or northerners. We'll continue to move forward with real results for Ontarians when it comes to public transportation.

VISITORS

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to welcome in the members' gallery councillor Maria McRae from the city of Ottawa—welcome, Councillor McRae; Barry Quinn, John Sobey, Mike Knoefler, Ray Balcon and Don Smith, Ottawa firefighters; as well as Johanne Levesque, daughter of deceased firefighter Claude Levesque. They serve our community so well. We're very proud of them and we thank them for coming to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to echo what my colleague from Ottawa West-Nepean just said. I want to let them know how proud we are today to stand and support them.

On the weekend I was able to be with Mark Johnson's mother and to tell her that I would be very much supportive of this bill, with Councillor McRae. So thank you very much.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think if we all stood on a point of order to recognize every single one of the wonderful firefighters who are here today, we would be taking quite a long time at this portion of the agenda. But I do want to say that I'm proud to see our Hamilton firefighters here as well: Larry Staples, our president; Henry Watson; Ron Summers; Stan—Stan, I can't remember your last name. I'm really sorry.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: For the sake of the very same sanity the member was talking about, for anyone who has not been invited to say hello, we say hello to everybody.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Yesterday the member for Erie–Lincoln raised a point of order concerning the language contained in a certain petition. The government House leader and the chief government whip also spoke to the point of order.

Having carefully reviewed the petition in question, I can only concur with the member for Erie–Lincoln that it is not temperate in its language and not respectful in its request.

The petition is not unique, in the sense that other petitions have been used recently as attacks on other members—as, I might add, have various members' statements.

The general tone and tenor of debate and language in this House, most recently exemplified by the petition challenged yesterday by the member for Erie–Lincoln, causes me grave concern, and I have addressed this several times.

All these tactics in combination represent an erosion and a lowering of the Legislative Assembly for the expediency of partisan gain. I'm not suggesting that the assembly is not a partisan forum—it certainly is—but I am suggesting that legitimate partisan interplay needs to come about in a manner that is respectful of the dignity of this place and accords each member the respect that is owed by virtue of his or her membership here.

With respect to the specific petition at issue, it is my decision that it is not acceptable for presentation in the House and will not be accepted. Going forward, I've asked the table to be especially vigilant of all petitions, having regard for my general level of concern about decorum and temperance in language.

During petitions, we in effect allow the public to come directly into this place in order to make a respectful request. The House does not dignify itself if it gives a petition attacking one of its own members, nor does the member representing it serve the greater interests of the institution.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: I would ask the House to join me in welcoming Maria Petrenkova and Ludmila Bakosova, visiting from Slovakia, joining their brother Branislav Galat and his wife Margita Galat.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Berardinetti from the standing committee on justice policy presents the committee's report as follows:

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth /
Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à créer la charge d'intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes et à y pourvoir.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE JOUR
DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

Ms. Mossop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 220, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day /
Projet de loi 220, Loi proclamant le Jour de Lincoln Alexander.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): This bill proclaims the third Wednesday of February in each year Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario's public schools. February, as you all know, is Black History Month, the third week in February is Heritage Week in Ontario and the third Monday in February is Heritage Day across Canada.

Who among us embodies black history and our heritage as a province and a country growing towards tolerance and inclusion more than our own accomplished, charismatic and most generous Lincoln MacCauley Alexander, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, former MP for 11 years and Minister of Labour of Canada?

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (PRESUMPTIONS
FOR FIREFIGHTERS), 2007LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET
L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS
DU TRAVAIL (PRÉSUMPTIONS
CONCERNANT LES POMPIERS)

Mr. Peters moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 221, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters and certain related occupations /
Projet de loi 221, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et

l'assurance contre les accidents du travail à l'égard des pompiers et de certaines professions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the minister wish to make a brief statement?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'll wait for ministerial statements.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm going to ask for unanimous consent to move forward with second and third reading of this bill. All parties spoke in favour of it when it was introduced by my honourable colleague Ms. Horwath. The firefighters are here today, we've had an opportunity to review the bill and we certainly would ask unanimous consent to call the orders and move forward without amendment or debate.

The Speaker: Mr. Wilson has asked for unanimous consent that we move forward on this bill to second and third reading without debate. Agreed? Agreed.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (PRESUMPTIONS FOR FIREFIGHTERS), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (PRÉSUMPTIONS CONCERNANT LES POMPIERS)

Mr. Peters moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 221, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters and certain related occupations / Projet de loi 221, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail à l'égard des pompiers et de certaines professions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (PRESUMPTIONS FOR FIREFIGHTERS), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (PRÉSUMPTIONS CONCERNANT LES POMPIERS)

Mr. Peters moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 221, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters and certain related occupations / Projet de loi 221, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail à l'égard des pompiers et de certaines professions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: In the spirit of co-operation, I would seek unanimous consent to have third reading of Bill 67, the mandatory organ donation declaration bill which has now received unanimous support in second reading, has gone through committee and has been referred back to the House for third reading. The organ donation bill.

The Speaker: Mr. Klees has asked for unanimous consent for the organ donation bill. I heard a no.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FIREFIGHTERS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and on behalf of the firefighters assembled here today, to all my colleagues of all sides, thank you.

Perhaps, Speaker, your statement at the beginning may have helped to get us to this position today, and I thank you.

I entered the Legislature today first stopping at the firefighters' memorial at the corner of College and University, and was moved when I was there because of the presence of that monument. It struck me, as I read the monument and I read the name of a friend of mine, Dennis Redman, 2001, St. Thomas, captain—and right beside Dennis is Robert Shaw, 2004, Hamilton, captain. Dennis was a good friend of mine who lost his life in the line of duty, in a different way than Bob Shaw, but they're both memorialized on that memorial, which struck me as I stood there today.

Unfortunately, the Premier could not be here today for the introduction and passing of this bill, but he was present this morning. Premier McGuinty has asked me to convey to the Legislature his tremendous pride in our firefighters and the work that each and every one of you do. He's also asked me to thank Jacqueline Shaw and her son Nathan, who lost a husband and a father—Hamilton firefighter Bob Shaw—for their inspiration in the development of this bill.

I was honoured and pleased to be able to introduce and pass this legislation, which would ensure that Ontario firefighters are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve when filing occupational disease claims with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. We introduced a bill that would allow us, through regulation, to identify diseases as well as heart injuries that would be presumed to be work-related for firefighters, unless it was shown otherwise. This bill will lift the burden of proof off the backs of our hard-working firefighters and their families.

Firefighters are vital to keeping our communities safe from life-threatening dangers. Every day they risk their

lives to protect us and to protect our property. As a result, though, they sometimes find their own lives threatened by occupational diseases. These are caused by exposure to toxic fumes and any number of hazardous substances that may be present when they are fighting fires.

Firefighters protect us. In return, we must protect them.

We must, as a government, ensure that they and their families are treated fairly and receive the respect that they deserve during this time of personal crisis. The bill that was introduced and passed today is going to ensure that this happens.

This bill has the support of many honourable members of all three parties today, and those individuals in this chamber know who they are. To those individuals, I say thank you.

It took, though, the leadership of Premier McGuinty to insist that we work with our stakeholders to bring this important piece of legislation forward.

There are two names that I do need to recognize from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. I'd ask all members to join me in recognizing Paul Atkinson and Colin Grieve for their work.

Currently, when a firefighter is diagnosed with cancer or a heart injury, they or their surviving families must go to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and demonstrate that the cause was work-related before they can receive compensation of any kind. This puts an enormous responsibility on them at a time when they are least equipped to deal with it.

Our proposal would take this responsibility off the firefighters and their families. It would reverse the onus, so that these diseases would be presumed to be work-related unless it were shown that there was another cause, such as a non-work-related exposure or heredity. It will make it easier for claims to be processed by the WSIB.

Our government will move quickly, through regulation, now that this bill is passed, to identify the eight forms of cancer that would be presumed to be work-related. This regulation as well would presume that any heart injury sustained by a firefighter within 24 hours of fighting a fire was work-related.

While initially extending this presumption to full-time firefighters with set years of service, it is our intent to go further—further, in fact, than any other jurisdiction in Canada. The legislation would be applied to all relevant claims back to January 1, 1960, an approach not taken by any other jurisdiction in Canada. Any firefighter's claim for an identified cancer diagnosed or heart injury suffered within 24 hours of fighting a fire on or after that date would be covered. Any claim that had been denied or is still pending during this period could be reopened and reassessed by the WSIB.

As well, it is our intention that we are going to move forward very quickly to consult with part-time firefighters, the fire marshal's office, fire investigators and volunteer firefighters on developing a regulation to determine what criteria will be used for the eight identified cancers. We believe that this is the best way to move

forward on this important issue. We believe that this will provide a fair and reasonable approach to ensuring that firefighters and their families receive fair treatment and respect in regard to workplace compensation claims for occupational disease and heart injuries.

This legislation helps to build on our commitment to health and safety in the province, but we need to recognize that, sadly, workers, including firefighters, do suffer job-related diseases and heart injuries. Today, collectively, we have done the right thing for Ontario firefighters. We must continue to ensure that they are able to face their personal tragedies and receive the support they deserve. The McGuinty government believes that this legislation will help ensure that our firefighters—heroes from all communities—are treated fairly in the face of occupational illness. It is the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do what we have just done. It is the fair thing to do.

I thank all of my colleagues assembled in this Legislature today for supporting our bill and providing for firefighters and their families what they need most.

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to raise the profile of this year's ERASE program: Eliminate Racing Activities on Streets Everywhere. Project ERASE is an annual province-wide campaign that is designed to eliminate street racing everywhere. The campaign started several years ago with local police services right across the greater Toronto area and has expanded and grown every year.

Earlier today, I attended the launch of this year's ERASE program. It's a campaign with the York Regional Police to deliver our message that confronting the dangerous practice of street racing is a priority of this government. We are committed to keeping Ontario's roads safe, and we have a simple message for street racers: Stay off our roads.

1410

Street racers need to know they are putting their own lives and the lives of innocent people at risk by racing or speeding. Almost half of all deaths on our roads are tied to speeding or loss of control. Every day in Ontario, two people die and 10 are seriously injured because of collisions and crashes. In fact, the police and media reports indicate that street racing may have been a factor in an estimated 39 road deaths in Ontario since 1999. These are senseless tragedies that should never have happened anywhere.

There's no such thing as an accident. It's either a collision or it's a crash, and it is totally preventable. That's why our government recently introduced legislation to tackle street racing head on.

Today, drivers charged and convicted of street racing can be fined up to \$1,000, assigned six demerit points, face jail time and lose their licence. But if our new legislation is passed, it contemplates even tougher sanctions

for drivers who use our roads, and especially for those who use our roads like racetracks. If passed, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, Bill 203, would give police the power to immediately suspend licences and impound vehicles for seven days when drivers are involved in street racing and stunt driving. That means that at the curbside, right then and there, the licence can be suspended for both the vehicle and the driver. It would also put in place the highest street racing fines in Canada. Minimum fines would increase from \$200 to \$2,000 and maximum fines will go to \$10,000.

We've given police across the province the tools they need to get tough with speeders, street racers and stunt drivers to get them off our streets. And yet, of course, there is more that we can do. Street racing is a selfish, thoughtless act that ends lives. By racing on our roads, people are choosing to put their own lives and the lives of other people at risk. Families and friends lose their loved ones. We cannot remain idle and let this happen.

Our government has worked tirelessly with many road safety partners to improve safety on our roads. I would like to say a special thank you to the two groups that I met with—one in Sudbury and the other here, where we had a forum on street racing. The police in particular, along with after-market-product individuals, victims' families and others who had an interest came together to look at the sanctions we needed to put in place. I owe them a debt of gratitude for their work.

With public education campaigns such as ERASE, we can get the message out that there is no tolerance for people who create a danger on our roads in Ontario. I would like to thank our police services and our road safety partners right across Ontario for their tremendous work and for their dedication in fighting street racing all year round. Our message is clear: Street racers and other speeders have no place on Ontario roads.

I call upon all members of this Legislature to join me in highlighting this important public campaign as we move forward into the spring and summer season.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): First, let me offer congratulations to the Minister of Transportation on her announcement today. Obviously, one issue that we can always agree on in this House is the importance of road safety in Ontario. Even in opposition, our party is committed to road safety, and we have been able to take action.

I think for a moment about the leadership the member for Oak Ridges has provided, who joined you at the event sponsored by the York Regional Police this morning. He introduced a tough bill to fight street racing in Ontario. I'm glad that your government has responded to his bill with legislation. My colleague the member for Durham has pointed out to this House on several occasions the importance of eliminating distractions such as cellphones while driving. And the member for Simcoe-Grey has repeatedly condemned your cancellation of the repairs to Highway 26 in his riding, and you have done nothing to help the people of Simcoe county.

Three years ago the Legislature unanimously passed my resolution directing the MTO to permit roadside memorials to commemorate the victims of drunk drivers. I'm happy that the government responded and has announced it will establish a program.

But there are a couple of issues I'm rather surprised at, particularly given the comments made by the minister today about the notion of needing the support of many other organizations. I find it in contradiction to the fact that you've cut off the funding to the Ontario Safety League and also the question of funding to the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving. It seems unfortunate that, while you recognized in your comments the importance of having everyone work together, you've left out a couple of really key players.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm very pleased today to rise on behalf of our leader, John Tory, and my caucus. I certainly applaud this move that has been undertaken by all members of the House today to give unanimous consent to this bill, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Presumption for Firefighters), 2007.

Ever since the introduction of the private member's bill on May 4, 2006, I know that our leader, John Tory, and our members of caucus have been very supportive of this initiative, and my colleague Jim Wilson spoke to this bill when it came forward on October 5, 2006. I do want to, on behalf of everyone in this House, express our appreciation to Andrea Horwath at this time for her leadership on this initiative.

Indeed, when we learned today, through the media this morning, that this bill was going to be coming forward, in discussions we had with our leader, John Tory, he felt it was very important that we do what was necessary in order to move forward this legislation, which is going to make it easier for firefighters to qualify for compensation for job-related cancers and heart disease. That is why we moved second and third reading. I hope now that the government will quickly complete their consultations and I hope they will bring forward the regulations, which will offer the needed protection to our firefighters. They are, as has already been said, vital to our community. They deserve fair treatment and they deserve respect in regard to workplace claims and occupational diseases and heart disease. So I applaud the government and the minister for bringing this forward today.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to thank all members for the unanimous consent. When I first spoke to Ms. Horwath's bill last year, I told her and I told young Nathan Shaw that we would not let them down, that we, as the Progressive Conservative caucus, would stand by you.

I said at that time, Nathan, that it was the best letter that I'd ever received in 16 years of public life, and I stand by that today. Your father would be very, very proud, and it's a very good day for you and your family and for firefighters. We applaud you and we applaud Ms.

Horwath. I think all members should get on their feet and once again thank these courageous people for bringing this forward and thank Mr. Peters for introducing the bill today.

Applause.

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Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On behalf of New Democrats, who have fought so hard for improved health and safety for firefighters and all workers, I am pleased to see that the McGuinty government brought forward the presumptive legislation, and I'm so proud of what we did today in terms of making sure it got swift passage and is ready to go to the next step, which is what needs to happen very quickly.

The impetus of people who have already been named—and I'm going to name them again because I'm so darn proud of them: people like the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, editorial boards across this province, the general public. Everybody has been pushing very hard to see the changes that were announced today by the minister come about, people like Fred LeBlanc, who's the president of the Professional Fire Fighters Association. And I can see that Brian George, the vice president, is here as well, and of course, Colin Grieve, a Hamilton guy; I've got to say, one of Hamilton's own. Colin Grieve and Paul Atkinson are really the brain trust of the firefighters in terms of the work that was done to bring presumptive legislation to the province of Ontario.

Henry Watson, the fire chief of my own city, of course has always been active on these issues and has been a good leader in our community. And of course, Nathan Shaw and Jackie Shaw have both been extremely instrumental in terms of bringing this issue to my attention. They were the impetus behind Bill 111. As you know, Captain Bob Shaw's name was on Bill 111. It was brought forward in his honour, and I can say that we've really succeeded today in an important step forward in moving the issue of presumptive legislation to the top of the agenda.

Many, many people have signed petitions across this province. This issue has been extremely important for so many people, for so many firefighters, so many communities, so many families. We all know the adage that when a building is on fire, everybody else is running out but the firefighters are running in. And they're often running into a toxic soup, and nobody really knows the effect that it will have on their lives. Yes, we know that we lose firefighters regularly in immediate fires where there is a critical injury or a death on the job. But what this legislation does is acknowledge and recognize that just through the work every day of going to fires in communities across this province and being exposed over and over again to those toxins, to those toxic soups that exist at these sites, firefighters are likely to come down with a number of cancers which the minister has indicated are in the bill.

Of course, I haven't seen the bill yet. We just passed it and I haven't even had a chance to read it, so I'm hoping—

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Trust us.

Ms. Horwath: Yes, that's later in my speech, Steve. The "trust us" part is later in the speech. But nonetheless, my fervent hope is that today everything is as it appears and that the government regulations, the schedules and the WSIB policies are all going to reflect the intention that the minister articulated and that all of us have continued to talk about.

The bottom line is, the commitment needs to be there. Definitely, the regs are important, but regs can be changed. So we just have to make sure that they're always changed for the better and they're not drawn back on, that we don't lose any ground in the process of the development of the regs and we make sure that everything that the government says is going to be in those regs is going to be there.

I'm running out of time very quickly, but I do want to say that firefighters need to know that New Democrats are going to be dogged in our watching of this process and making sure that the government makes good on the promises. We know that they haven't been that great on promises in the history of their term in government, so we're going to be watching and making sure that those regulations are put in place and that they're never drawn back on. We're going to be watching to make sure that the policy at the board is holding up the promise of today's spectacular day. That's exactly what we are going to do.

I'm very proud to have been one small part in this fabulous fight. Thank you, Nathan. Thank you, Jackie. Thank you, firefighters.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats welcome this legislation. We're pleased to see it become law, and we're especially proud of Nathan and Jackie Shaw, who with incredible courage and tenacity have made sure that the loss of a husband and a dad long before his time has made him live forever, because his loss will save the lives and the well-being of families for years to come.

We're especially proud of Andrea Horwath, who on behalf of New Democrats spearheaded this movement with her legislation, struggled across the province to make sure that it came to the forefront in the mind of every firefighter and every voter. Bill 111 is surely the parent of the legislation we witnessed today. We're proud of you, Andrea.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who I think is nearby. I see his briefing book at the ready. Perhaps I can have the indulgence of the House for a moment. I think he's—

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): He's here.

Mr. Tory: Ah, there he is, whether he wants to be or not.

My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration about the political slush fund. The Minister of Finance, who also happens to be chair of Dalton McGuinty's re-election campaign, is the man responsible for overseeing the spending of taxpayers' dollars. It was reported in the *Toronto Star* last Saturday, "The way it worked was that the Liberal caucus was told there were year-end funds available, and members were asked to recommend worthwhile groups." If this was a cologne, they would call it "eau de Gomery" or "scent of sponsorship."

What I'd like to know from the minister is this: What exactly was the minister told by the Liberal Party campaign chair or his staff about the disposition of this year-end slush fund money?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): As I've said a number of times in this House, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I'm extremely pleased that many needs over the years which have had little attention paid to them are finally starting to be met. That's why we're responding to so many excellent organizations in cities across the province that have said that for too many years they were never listened to, whether it be for capital improvements, whether it be for regular operating funds, whether it be for new programs like the loan program for immigrants. That's who we listened to; that's where we got our inspiration to reach out and try and help so many newcomers' volunteer organizations that have been ignored for so long.

Mr. Tory: It's harder and harder to understand, as the days pass, why the minister doesn't recognize the fact that there's very little debate about that part of this. What the members and the public are interested in knowing about is the process that was followed here, to be able to satisfy themselves that the taxpayers' money was respected, that proper care was taken in how that money was distributed, that there was fairness between and among groups and between and among members of the Legislature as to how the money was handed out.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration made a statement on April 18: "I get a notification from finance that there is some capital funding available...." I would ask the minister: How exactly did this process work? That's what we're interested in knowing here so we can be sure the taxpayers' money was respected. What did the Liberal Party campaign chair or his staff say about this money and how it was to be dealt with? What direction did the minister receive from the Minister of Finance about the distribution of these tax dollars?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As the first stand-alone Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, there are many incredible needs out there. For many years, organizations big and small, whether it be AWIC here in Toronto or the St. Catharines Multicultural Centre, which is in a building that was built in 1860—that's what they're in: a building built in 1860. They haven't had any resources to repair that old building, and they are a centre to help new-

comers, to help women who are suffering distress. They get counselling; they get job training. For decades, that centre has never gotten any help.

Those are the kinds of agencies that are coming to my ministry, asking for support. We listened and we tried to help, whether it be the agency in St. Catharines or an agency in Kingston.

1430

Mr. Tory: All I'm trying to ask the minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, is why he can't answer a single question on the subject of how you made the decisions between and among all of these worthy groups. Who got considered and who didn't? Who knew that you had money and who didn't? How did you decide between and among these various groups who got the money and who didn't? How did you follow up to make sure the taxpayers' money was being properly respected when it was given out?

I want to quote from the *Toronto Star* on April 20: "Colle seemed unclear as to how the grants were approved, but suggested Sorbara and Public Infrastructure Renewal Minister David Caplan are in charge of the purse strings.

"It has to go through the other ministers and ultimately, I guess, by cabinet."

That is what the minister said. What I want to know is this: How did it work? How did you decide? Who picked the groups? Who picked the winners and losers? Did it actually go to the cabinet and get approved? I think we're entitled to have those answers, Mr. Speaker, and I ask the minister, through you, to answer those questions now for this House and for the public of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, as minister, it is my job to ensure that all members of our government understand that there are many needs, and all members of cabinet understand that I'm the advocate for helping volunteer organizations; I'm the advocate for helping newcomer settlement organizations. I'm constantly trying to find ways of helping them. Whether I'm advocating to the former Liberal government—who didn't help us in coming across with the federal-provincial agreement, or this government that's there in Ottawa now, or whether it is our government, it's my job to let government and ministers know that we must do more to help many organizations and many programs that, again, have been unmet for two decades by governments of all stripes.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Tory: Again to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration regarding the political slush fund: Let's deal with one of the particular examples here. The Minister of Finance, as we all know, is also the chair of the Liberal Party campaign. We also know that the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre got \$200,000 a mere three weeks after it had registered as a charitable organization which was supposed to be for the purpose of protecting animals. We know that seven out of seven directors of this organization have ties to the Liberal Party, including a riding president, a candidate and a number of donors to

the party. We know that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has said that these slush fund monies had to go through the Liberal Party campaign chair prior to being approved.

My question is very simple: Did the Minister of Finance approve and have to approve of this \$200,000 payment to this organization? It's a very simple question. I think you have an obligation to answer it to the people and to the members of this House.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, as minister, there are many communities all across southern Ontario now, in new areas like Kitchener-Waterloo, London, or they're into York region or they're into Peel region, that are trying to meet needs that have not been met. I try to find ways of addressing those needs, as I've said, through a variety of programs. We do it through \$50 million we spend on language training programs. We do it through giving extra capacity to organizations. We do it through our partnership with school boards, with our ESL programs. We do it through our partnership with agencies like OCASI or the Maytree Foundation. We do bridge training programs at Ryerson University. So we are trying to deliver those programs and areas. One area was in the Iranian community, where there weren't enough services, and we were trying to find a way of delivering much-needed services. That's what I tried to do.

Mr. Tory: We hear this over and over again. What we never hear is any answer to the question of whether there was any process in place whatsoever, any process at all, that ensured fairness between and among groups. I met one at lunchtime this afternoon outside this building who said they asked you for money and that they were turned down absolutely. We'll hear more about that in the days to come.

Was there any mechanism or process that anybody in the world understood except you and your Liberal colleagues as to how you decided who got this money, that the process was fair, that the organizations were as they said they were, that they were going to do the things that you've said that they're going to do with the money? In the case of the Canadian-Iranian organization we've talked about, the money is still sitting there a year later in a bank account and nothing has been done with it—nothing—nothing good or bad; just nothing. It's sitting there—taxpayers' money—in a bank account. That might have been helping some other people somewhere else who had some use of the money at the time.

Would you agree with me, in the words of one of your own Liberal MPPs quoted in the *Star*, that this looks terrible? Because it does, and it's time you called in the auditor. Would the minister agree to do so?

Hon. Mr. Colle: My ministry is proud to partner with organizations that have had long-outstanding track records. Some organizations, like Frontier College or the Greek Community of Metropolitan Toronto, have been in existence for many, many years. The resources they get in our partnership are used to expand capacity. You cannot create an instant community centre in 24 hours. Sometimes you have to get more partners, you raise more

money and you continue to grow capacity to do that. That's the kind of investment that we make. But some organizations like I've mentioned before have already—the Greek community centre is already three quarters built. You can see it up there on Warden Avenue. That's proceeding. Not all organizations are able to spend every cent in the first 24 hours. Some are at different stages of development.

Mr. Tory: The minister makes reference to long-standing groups. We're talking about one here that existed for a matter of days before you gave them a huge cheque. It was set up to care for animals, and now it seems to be in some other business.

You talked about the challenge of raising money. In the year since you gave them—without process, without application, without scrutiny—hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money, they have raised exactly \$15,000, according to the newspaper, on their own during that period of time. Don't you think it would have been reasonable to say that maybe your money would come—the taxpayers' money; it's not your money; that's the problem—the taxpayers' money would come after they'd reached a certain threshold in fundraising? You could make a commitment without sending the cheque.

This is about learning the lessons of Gomery. It is about things that do look terrible, in the words of your own Liberal MPP. It is about respecting the taxpayers' money. Why don't you try to wipe away the smell of sponsorship that is increasingly permeating this building by calling the auditor in, letting him have a look at this and deciding if everything is as you say it is? What are you afraid of?

The Speaker: Before the minister answers, the Leader of the Opposition has been doing a wonderful job of placing it in the third person. If you would like to—

Mr. Tory: What's the minister afraid of, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Perfect.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Leader of the Opposition continues not to correct the record. That organization in question was incorporated in 2005. There was a clerical error in getting their charitable registration later. They were created to help newcomers and to create a community centre.

The member again starts to ask for instant results. There are many organizations that are not as large as the United Jewish Appeal, for instance, which already has many investments in the ground. Some organizations, like the Casa dos Açores of Ontario, might take some time to finally build the centre they've been searching for for a decade. They are now very close to having a piece of property, and hopefully it will be built very quickly.

As I said, there are different stages for many different organizations because some of them, again, are very volunteer-based. Some of them have been around, again, for 100 years. It depends on the organizations and their different capacities.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Citizenship. The Minister of Citizenship, the Premier and several members of the McGuinty government continue to cast aspersions of racism whenever opposition members ask for an immediate investigation by the Auditor General on the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund.

My question is this: Does the Minister of Citizenship think I am racist when I ask for an immediate investigation and report by the Auditor General on a slush fund that had no formal application process, no criteria for evaluation, no evaluation or audit process after the money was handed out, and where significant amounts of the money seem to have gone to organizations that are very closely connected to Liberal riding associations? Do you think I'm a racist for asking for an investigation of that kind of slush fund?

1440

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Premier dealt with that last Friday. He dealt with that issue, here in the House, yesterday. The key thing is that, as I've said before, this is an issue of helping many volunteer organizations, many of them dealing with seniors or with cultural groups, that for many years have been ignored by government. I've said that that is what this issue is about, that members on all sides of the House and all levels of government have not done enough in past years to invest in these incredible newcomers, especially, and these volunteer groups that have come to our province.

For 10 years in this House, before I was minister, sitting in opposition, there was no discussion about investing in our newcomers in this Legislature. Look at Hansard and see how much discussion there was about this. What I'm saying is, that's what this issue is about: paying attention to these partners that have been ignored—

The Speaker: Thank you. Order.
The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: The minister must not be able to read the paper, because I want to quote from the Globe and Mail. The Globe and Mail editorial says that the Premier "should do as the opposition asks and request a speedy review by the Auditor General." The Owen Sound Sun Times editorial says that "it's this kind of spending abuse that can't be allowed to go unchecked." The Toronto Sun editorial said, "A review by the auditor is the best and only way to ensure proper accountability. Too bad that message is lost on our current government."

Minister, this is about a fund that had no criteria, that wasn't announced to the public, that wasn't announced to all kinds of organizations out there who would have liked to apply, and yet a suspiciously significant amount of money went to people closely connected to the Liberal Party. Why do you cast aspersions of racism when all we're asking for is—

The Speaker: The leader might want to rephrase the last part of the question.
Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is the same leader of the third party who painted these organizations with one broad brush and said that they were fly-by-night. These are organizations that we partnered with, like the South Asian Women's Centre, SPRINT—Senior People's Resources in North Toronto—St. Christopher House, St. Clair West Services for Seniors, the Sudbury multicultural arts centre, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office of Toronto, Thunder Bay Multicultural Association, Toronto Chinese Community Services Association, Tropicana Community Services and the University Settlement Recreation Centre. That is the aspersion he cast on all of these organizations that we've tried to help by, for the first time, giving them some resources to take care of their capital needs that for 20 years were not even paid attention to.

Mr. Hampton: I say to the minister, what the Globe and Mail is referring to and what the Owen Sound Sun Times is referring to are the two organizations that I've asked questions about. The one organization got its charitable status three weeks before you gave them \$200,000. They have absolutely no record of providing any services whatsoever to the Iranian community. In fact, many people in the Iranian-Canadian community don't even know who they are, even today. The money continues to sit in a bank account. All of the people who are in that organization are either Liberal riding candidates, Liberal riding association presidents, or other partisan Liberals. Those are the organizations that I've asked about. You're the one casting aspersions of racism. I ask you: Do you believe it's racist when someone simply asks for an Auditor General's investigation?

The Speaker: You'll have to rephrase the last part of that question.

Mr. Hampton: Does the Minister of Citizenship believe that I am being racist when I simply ask for an Auditor General's examination—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, what I told the member is that the one thing he truly is is reckless. One of the organizations he condemned had a card-carrying NDPer as the president.

What we are trying to look at in these organizations, which have volunteers and board members and staff from all political stripes, all walks of life—if you look at the breadth of the organizations, you will see that they are a cross-section of what's best about Ontario: There are people volunteering, there are people who are caring, and these people who have been caring and volunteering have been doing such excellent work, but for many years they never got any help from any level of government.

Now we are trying to invest in these organizations, which for years were never given the time of day by any government, and all of a sudden we're the ones being called—

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Citizenship: We receive notification from very good, long-serving organizations every day. At noon hour at a celebration I was

approached by some people who are long-standing members of an immigrant community who provide all kinds of services. They cannot understand how \$30 million would go out the door with no announcement of the program, no formal application process, no criteria for evaluating proposals and no follow-up audit or evaluation. They just can't understand how any government would operate that way.

I say to the minister that this is why we are requesting an Auditor General's investigation. I ask the question again: Does the minister believe I am being a racist when I ask for an Auditor General's investigation and report on this kind of slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: My ministry has a number of programs. We have an incredible program of bridge training, where foreign-trained nurses, pharmacists, teachers and dietitians are able to get employment opportunities.

We have \$50 million in partnership with school boards where we teach English as a second language. We also have a settlement program. We have an opportunity here to invest in some capital improvements, and that's what we've done. When the opportunity is there to help groups that need to fix their dilapidated buildings, get out of basements and up to the main floor, these are the organizations we've been talking with, visiting through the course of the last couple of years. We try to help them meet those needs.

Mr. Hampton: I would say to the minister and to members of the McGuinty government that you can try to avoid answering the question all you want, but the question is going to remain, and the question was put by the Globe and Mail editorial also today, "It does not take a bloodhound to detect the whiff of a slush fund, and to wonder whether the Liberals are making such free use of public money to suit their own electoral ambitions...."

That's the question, Minister: whether some of this money that went out the door without any process, without any criteria, without any announcement, without any follow-up evaluation, went to people who are simply serving as fronts for the Liberal Party. Don't you think, Minister, that there should be an immediate Auditor General's investigation and report on this "whiff of a slush fund," as the Globe and Mail suggests?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, if you look at the organizations that are on our website, based on our principles of ensuring that they engage in diversity enhancement, increased volunteer participation, community building, cultural inclusion—because I also have the citizenship part of my portfolio, which means that we honour volunteers, whether they be seniors, whether they be Girl Guides—in fact, right now we're honouring up to 9,000 volunteers, as we speak, across this province.

1450

As I've said, these organizations are in communities all across Ontario, big and small. They are from every walk of life. We are proud to partner with these organizations because they provide great work in communities. That is an important part of building a true city or a true region, because the services they provide are essential, whether they be volunteer or helping newcomers.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, what I think also bothers a lot of people about this is that we all recognize that there is an untold number of community organizations and cultural groups that do wonderful work. They provide senior services; they help with children; they provide settlement services. Many of these organizations could not apply to your slush fund because you didn't tell them about the slush fund; you didn't tell them to send in a proposal. Yet, organizations that have no history in providing services, organizations that seem to be dominated by partisan Liberals, some of whom now want to run as candidates, somehow found out about the fund and got grants of \$200,000, \$250,000.

How could it be, Minister, that legitimate organizations didn't even know this money existed, but organizations that have hardly existed at all and serve as fronts for the Liberal Party got money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Our government is partnering with organizations like the Kababayan Community Centre, the Korean Canadian Women's Association, the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, the Maytree Foundation, the Mennonite Central Committee and the multicultural council. We have many programs where we're partnering with these organizations. We're also trying to help them at times when they need capital improvements.

There are many of these organizations that have great needs. We haven't been able to supply everything out there, because there hasn't been any investment for decades. Now we have an even better process because there is a growing need on the capital side, where there is a direct application online and a registry where we can track these needs, because it's evident there's much more work to do.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and it relates to a follow-up question of yesterday, relating to the scandalous transfer of \$200,000 from the minister's political slush fund to a bank account over which signing authority is held by no one else but Liberal partisans.

I have a letter here—because the minister yesterday, as you know, refused to admit that he did anything wrong—signed by 13 leaders of the Iranian Canadian community. This was addressed to the Premier, copied to the minister. They say this:

"To the best of our knowledge the designated group that received the funding had no prior experience of promoting the welfare or safeguarding the interests of Iranian Canadians in Ontario.

"The flawed and arbitrary manner in which this grant was rewarded" is unconscionable.

Here is my question to the minister: If you won't respond to us, will you at least respond to these people in the community?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We have over 130 different cultural groups of newcomers in Ontario. We have many needs in these groups. In a variety of organizations, there are many that are more established and some that aren't. Some disagree with each other.

There was an attempt by us to try and provide a service in an area where there was a need. You can't get total unanimity from every single member of 130 cultural groups that come to this country. We tried to help meet a need. We tried to invest in an organization that was going to try and meet that need. That's what we tried to do.

Mr. Klees: I quote again from the letter: "The flawed and arbitrary manner in which this grant was rewarded, coupled with the reality that this group has had no prior experience of assisting members of our community, has greatly heightened tension between various members of the Iranian Canadian community in Ontario."

The minister is being asked by the community itself. Here is the quote from the community: "We respectfully demand that full investigations of this transaction be undertaken so as to safeguard the interests of members of the Iranian Canadian community in Ontario."

The community itself is saying that the mishandling of this slush fund by this minister is causing tension within their own community. Will the minister, based on the request from this community, agree to an investigation of how he has handled the disbursing of these funds?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are many challenges out there in trying to address these needs—many communities, as I said. Many of these communities do incredible work. What I want to say is that at times members of one community, or two or three communities, say they've been ignored by this level of government; they're being ignored by our government or being ignored by city hall. There are constant differences of opinion about what the needs are and who is meeting the needs, but they are all identifying the fact that there needs to be more done. That's what we have tried to emphasize, that at the time action was needed because they've been neglected, not listened to, there was no funding. In fact, the first thing the members opposite did when they came to power was they closed down Ontario Welcome House. That's the first thing they did.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. As an immigrant and the MPP for a culturally diverse riding where more than half of the residents are immigrants, I was deeply offended by the Premier's suggestion last Friday that the tough but fair questions posed by members on this side of the House about the government's slush fund were somehow racially motivated. Since the Premier refuses to apologize, I'm going to ask this minister: Will he do the honourable thing and apologize on the Premier's behalf, not just to members of this House but to all Ontarians, who demand accountability and transparency from their government?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Premier made his position clear in the House yesterday and on Friday. I say to the member opposite, I have a great deal of respect for the passion he has for his community. I concur that his part of Toronto needs a great deal of help, needs a great deal of support for newcomers, and I know that's what motivates

him. He's motivated to try to help the vast variety of newcomers who are in his riding of York South–Weston, who for too many years have lived below the poverty line, for too many years have been unemployed, for too many years have not had opportunity. He is advocating for that, and I support him as he advocates for the newcomers in his riding and throughout Ontario.

The Speaker: Thank you. I'd just remind the member that the question needs to be placed through the Speaker.

Mr. Ferreira: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As my party's citizenship critic, I have received correspondence from other Ontarians who are similarly offended by the words and actions of this government. I'll read from an e-mail that was sent to the minister and copied to my office.

"What left me appalled was your suggestion, Minister, that to question this practice was, in your eyes, synonymous with failure to appreciate our diverse society. Your accusations that the opposition does not appreciate diversity paints not only MPPs but all Ontarians who question this Liberal slush fund with the same brush. This is tantamount to calling a great portion of Ontario's population xenophobic or racist."

I ask again: Will the Minister of Citizenship display the leadership that the Premier refuses to, and apologize to all Ontarians?

1500

Hon. Mr. Colle: What I will say is that I am so extremely proud of all Ontario because, wherever I've gone, there's an incredible, positive change happening. Whether I go talk to the mayor of Sudbury, the mayor of Middlesex Centre, the mayor of London or the mayor of Hamilton or Windsor, mayors of communities all across Ontario are saying to me, "Can we be part of attracting more immigrants to our community?" That's what Ontario business leaders are saying. That's what Ontario mayors are saying. That's what Ontario communities are saying. They're saying in a very loud way, "We want more immigrants to come to Samia." They want more immigrants to come to Kitchener-Waterloo. The regional chairman, Ken Seiling—we've made a partnership with them to make Kitchener-Waterloo an immigration gateway. That's what is happening in Ontario. It's a proud recognition that if our newcomers succeed, all of Ontario succeeds. We are partners in investing in that success for cities large and small and for our newcomers.

The Speaker: Thank you. If the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke wish to have private conversations, they can have them outside.

New question. The member for York South.

ONTARIO CHILD BENEFIT

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): It is York West, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Speaker, through you, is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I note that the NDP members of York South–Weston and Parkdale–High Park have no interest in sharing the good news with

their constituents, but I'd like to say I'm very pleased to highlight the unprecedented—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The member for Parkdale–High Park will come to order. The member for Niagara Centre will come to order. The member for Parkdale–High Park will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Government House leader, I've had enough advice from you over the day.

Member for York South.

Mr. Sergio: It is York West. Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to re-question the question again. Let me start through you, Speaker, to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I know that the NDP members from York South–Weston and Parkdale–High Park have no interest in sharing this wonderful news, but let me say, and I'm very pleased to highlight the point, that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: We had been doing so well. I need to be able to hear members place their questions. Member for York West, I would like you to be able to ask your question.

Member for York West.

Mr. Sergio: Through you, Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I know that the NDP members for York South–Weston and Parkdale–High Park have no interest in sharing the good news with their constituents, but I'm very pleased to be able to highlight the unprecedented \$2.1 billion in investment to Ontario's children. We know that most families are working very hard nowadays. In fact, by creating the Ontario child benefit, we are helping to make sure lower-income families with kids have an easier time making ends meet. The Ontario child benefit is a massive investment in over one million kids. I share the disappointment of so many families who would have loved to get more money, but shamefully, the NDP voted against it.

Child poverty needs to be addressed, and we are raising the bar for a lot of these families. I am asking the minister to—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We've wasted a lot of time through this little period trying to have this question asked, and I would ask all members to be helpful. When a member is asking a question, show some respect. Show some respect for the institution, and especially, show some maturity.

Minister.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I did hear that the member from York West is asking about the Ontario child benefit. Apart from the fact that we're all very pleased with the Ontario child benefit, I thought I'd share with you a couple of comments from people who work with poverty every single day, like Gail Nyberg, executive director of the Daily Bread Food Bank, who said, "The Ontario child benefit will reduce barriers faced by

families with children who are trying to leave welfare for work. At the same time, it will help reduce child poverty and hunger."

Michael Mendelson, senior scholar from the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, said, "This is a great day and a great change. It's historic."

June Callwood was also very, very supportive. She said she was "thrilled with the legislation." She never dreamt that she'd hear "anything this good." She said, "Dalton McGuinty is a good man, and he really heard us."

I look forward to the supplementary.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm not going to warn the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke again.

Supplementary, the member from Thornhill.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Mr. Speaker, through you back to the minister, I have to add that our 2007 budget was a great budget, with investments in important priorities like children, health care, education and transportation. That is why I feel it was so important for all Ontarians to know about the Ontario child benefit.

I would like to ask the minister to tell us when families with kids will start to receive the new Ontario child benefit.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The Ontario child benefit will issue its first payment of up to \$250 per child on July 27 this year. It's an income-based benefit, so it's really important that families file their tax returns. I also need them to have been registered for the Canada child tax benefit. That's really all they need to do.

Then, starting in July next year, monthly payments of up to \$50 per child will commence. They are non-taxable. These amounts will increase to a maximum of up to \$1,100 per year by the year 2011.

It's good news for families: 1.3 million children, over 600,000 families, should benefit from this.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Culture. On Friday, the Premier said she was running a slush fund. On Monday, she said there were applications. On Tuesday, when asked whose version of events was correct—hers or the Premier's—we got a bizarre recital of her speaking notes on libraries. That suggests to me and those of us on this side of the House that maybe it was the Premier who was giving us the straight goods when he said that "the money goes out the door, just like that."

But I want to be sure, so I'll ask the minister if she can tell us—through you, Mr. Speaker—whose version of events is the right one: the Premier, who said there was no application, who said that the minister is running a slush fund, or the minister, who said the Premier was wrong and there was in fact an application process.

1510

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I'm proud of the investments that have been made in our

libraries, have been made in our museums, have been made in other major agencies across this province in arts and culture. These agencies, as everyone knows, are subject to annual audits, they have boards of directors, and they all have significant private sector support. I would like to add that it's smart investment to invest in our arts and cultural sector. This sector, as a whole, contributes over \$17 billion to Ontario's economy. I say again that I'm proud of the commitment and support we have provided, because unfortunately, for too many years when the Tories were in power, they totally disregarded arts and culture in the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Munro: As I said through you on Tuesday, Mr. Speaker, it's not a difficult question. It doesn't require a long answer. On Friday the Premier said that "the money goes out the door, just like that." On Monday the minister said there was an application process, but on Tuesday she didn't back that up. Again today she hasn't turned the page in her notes. We're back to the libraries. That's the answer she gave me the last time. So I'm asking for the minister to stand in her place and tell us whose version of events is correct: the Premier's, the money flying out the door, or hers, the application program. Who should we believe?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: The Premier and this government are focused on continuing to create a strong environment so that arts and the cultural sector in this province can thrive and grow. We've made crucial investments that strengthen our arts and cultural sector, strengthen our people and strengthen our economy. I make no apology for that. All of the agencies are subject to annual audits. They have boards of directors. They have significant private sector support. I would suggest that it is important for us to have a competitive edge to compete globally through the investment in arts and culture. It's about quality of life and it's about a strong economy.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. On Tuesday the minister said he was going to meet with a delegation from the Hindu Samaj Hamilton and region temple. The minister claims to be interested in helping this group, as we all heard, apply for provincial funding to help rebuild the \$1.8-million cultural centre and temple that were destroyed by an arsonist in Ontario's worst post-9/11 hate crime. This is an urgent issue. Why has the minister's office not contacted the Hindu Samaj Temple to schedule this urgent, urgent meeting?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Again, I just reflect back on the fact that this was a tragic event that occurred in 2001. Governments have tried to help this temple. I assured the member the other day when she asked me and I said I would meet with the temple, and I'll do that.

Ms. Horwath: The issue is the urgency of the matter. If the minister was paying attention, he would know that

there is a significant problem with the current financing of the capital improvements that needed to be made to that building. It is, in fact, very urgent. I sent the minister's office a fax on Tuesday. My staff called the minister's office on Wednesday. It is now Thursday, and there is a deafening silence from the minister's office.

The McGuinty government hid the fact from the Hindu Samaj leaders that there were capital funds even available for projects like theirs and repeatedly rejected their request for funding. Now, after the minister says he's going to meet with this group and address the urgent matter, there has been no follow-up. It's embarrassing, especially since Ontario is the only partner that failed to contribute to the Hindu Samaj Temple fund.

Speaker, I've raised this matter with the minister three times this week alone and I want to ask him, through you: Will he quit stalling and quickly arrange the meeting he promised?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, I know the member recognizes that many of these incredible organizations, of all different faiths and all different backgrounds, are in need of help, and that's what we try to do. We've now established a direct application registry which is going to track these for the first time, because this was never done before. We're trying to do that as best we can. I told the member when she raised this the other day, I will meet with them.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: I have a question that might be of interest to the member from Parkdale-High Park. During this past summer, the community of Parkdale-High Park welcomed the news of a new state-of-the-art hospital to be built on the existing Runnymede Healthcare Centre site. Connie Dejak, president and CEO of Runnymede Healthcare, said this: "The announcement made by the McGuinty government has erased 20 years of uncertainty."

Minister, the community of Parkdale-High Park would like to know: Is this project going forward?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Runnymede hospital has, for 60, perhaps 70, maybe even 80 years, been operating out of a site that is a converted educational facility. We're very proud that within the next 12 months, not only will the hospital be going forward but a very significant expansion to St. Joe's hospital, also in riding of Parkdale-High Park, will be taking shape.

At the Runnymede site, we'll be evolving that from a 95-bed hospital to a 200-bed complex continuing care facility, and down at St. Joseph's Health Centre there are already early works projects under way that are leading to a major redevelopment of St. Joe's that will see modern maternal and newborn services and create a capacity for a six-bed child and adolescent mental health unit.

After very little action by previous governments on hospital construction, our government, in five years, is in the midst of building more hospitals in the province of Ontario than the last five governments in Ontario combined.

Mr. Zimmer: Minister, I'm glad you've raised the issue of mental health. Looking back to the early 1990s, the government of the day actually cut mental health funding by \$65 million. Relief could have been offered by way of supporting housing units and counselling, but nothing was done for years and years to come.

Community support services are necessary to help vulnerable people live independent and productive lives. The community, the constituents of Parkdale–High Park, are in need of these types of services. Minister, how have you addressed these needs?

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I want to thank the member from York South–Weston for the congratulatory heckle that he offered with respect to the fact that I'm going to marry my same-sex partner this summer, and I hope—he's inquiring as to who's participating—when he goes through the same circumstance, I hope he'll invite me.

When we look to the riding of Parkdale–High Park, we look to an organization like CODA which is deeply involved in the community, providing services for people with mental health problems and acquired brain injuries. Indeed, for a 12-year run, led by the New Democratic Party in our province, community mental health received no additional resources.

We've surely changed the situation: new service enhancements and short-term crisis beds, support for people with acquired brain injury and mental health supportive housing. All told, the budget of CODA from the great riding of Parkdale–High Park has gone up under our watch by 273%.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning his slush fund. Yesterday, we heard about My Canada Integration and Settlement Services, which has been around since 2001. It has had to close its doors because they couldn't get the \$36,000 from you that they needed to stay open, but an animal welfare organization, in business for barely three weeks, managed to get \$200,000 because of its Liberal Party ties. The minister's response yesterday was that, "Most organizations are seeing a dramatic increase in the available funding they never saw before." But the people who access My Canada this week saw a dramatic decrease in the services available to them. Can the minister please explain why My Canada was denied the funding they needed to continue providing services?

1520

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): As I said yesterday, the member opposite

fails to recognize the fact that for the first time in 20 years in Ontario, in York region, Richmond Hill, Markham, Mimico, all over this province, there are now funds available as a result of the hard-fought battle we made with the federal government to get the federal government to finally recognize the fact that there are 140,000 immigrants who come to Ontario every year. Now programs will be allowed to invest up to \$3,800 per newcomer in Ontario where before, under the Tories, the newcomers only got \$800. That's where the resources are. Settlement services in York region and all over Ontario are hiring people, expanding programs and opening up doors because of that hard-fought battle for the \$920 million we were successful at.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yesterday the minister talked about how every agency, big and small, has different needs. That's all well and good. My Canada needed \$36,000 to continue to stay in operation, and it looks like the Liberal candidate needed \$200,000 to buy his election in Richmond Hill.

The minister has been very careful in not answering questions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: The minister has been very careful in not answering questions. His failure to deny that the Liberal Party campaign chair or his staff have ever given direction on which group to give money to or which group not to give money to suggests that that's in fact what did happen. The minister can clear this up with a simple, direct answer. Who is pulling the strings—the minister or the Liberal Party campaign chair?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The reality is that for the first time an Ontario government is recognizing the fact that there is growing immigration settlement in York region. We have just created a partnership with York region to establish it as an immigration gateway. We have given resources of \$300,000 to the region of York to create that gateway.

With the federal government, we'll be opening up a new access centre in York region. JVS is now offering JobConnect services in York region. Catholic Community Services of York Region is now offering more services.

There are incredible new investments made in York region where they were ignored for so long. No one spoke up for the needs there. They are now speaking up. I've met with the CEO of the United Way of York Region, Rahul Bhardwaj, who has now moved on, back to the private sector, and the Markham Board of Trade diversity committee. Good things are happening for the first time in York region, where for many years those services didn't exist.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, for three long weeks—I'm sure you think the

longest three weeks of your life—this government has stonewalled the people of Ontario: (1) in refusing to answer questions about why millions of dollars were shovelled to groups with no application process, no criteria, no follow-up or even where the money went; (2) why some of the money ended up in groups with strong Liberal connections; (3) why the Premier is afraid to bring in the Auditor General and you yourself have refused the same request; and, lastly, with the whole fear of your government and the Premier to apologize.

My question, through you, Mr. Speaker, is: Why should anyone believe that this government cares about them when this government is doing everything it can possibly do to avoid answering a single question legitimately put to it?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I've said on a number of occasions, there are many, many organizations and programs that have not existed or have been underfunded. For instance, we now have an Ontario public service internship program for newcomers. It never existed. Now we have foreign-trained pharmacists or foreign-trained economists in internship programs. We have a loan program of up to \$5,000 for every newcomer who needs to pay for courses or books. We spent \$50 million on bridge training programs for foreign-trained dietitians or social workers. These are the investments we're making, along with the international medical graduate programs with Minister Smitherman.

We're also investing in our long-standing partners or organizations that are trying to fill needs. Their capital needs were never even talked about in decades. We are partnering—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know that all members will want to join me in wishing the members and representatives of the College Student Alliance a great welcome to the Legislature.

PETITIONS

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

Of course, I thank the people of the Alliston area for sending that to me and I support the petition.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I'm pleased to present the following petition, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the right to join a union and to fully participate in free collective bargaining is recognized by the United Nations through its International Labour Organization as a fundamental human right; and

"Whereas part-time workers at the province's universities and secondary schools have the right to free collective bargaining; and

"Whereas these part-time college workers do the same work as their full-time counterparts; and

"Whereas this work is often performed without comparable rights and remuneration; and

"Whereas these workers are subject to discriminatory treatment by their employer; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada to deny this basic right to part-time college workers; and

"Whereas there is no rationale for denying bargaining rights to these employees; and

"Whereas the abuse of part-time workers is having an impact on the quality of education college students receive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to extend full collective bargaining rights to part-time college workers."

I agree and will affix my signature and hand it to page Dillon.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have three petitions today related to the regulation of zoos to protect animals and communities.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

1530

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I enthusiastically support this petition, affix my signature to it and send it down to the table with Zachary.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Fairness for Families in the 905 Belt." It reads:

"Whereas the population of the greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units, with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions"—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Where's your petition from yesterday?

Mr. Flynn: You know, Speaker, I thought you could get through a petition without the ignorance of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing's heckling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Take your seat. Retract that statement now.

Mr. Flynn: I withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker: Next petition, Oak Ridges.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition from the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic school in Markham addressed to the Parliament of Ontario.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I am pleased to affix my signature as a proud proponent of this bill and pass it to Safa to present to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Hold it, hold it. On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Klees: The Speaker can recognize—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: No, in the tradition of this place—

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat, Deputy House Leader, now.

The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Move.

Mr. Wilson: I have a petition signed by teachers and students of St. Michael's College School in Toronto, including the president, Father Redican.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Speaker, this is very—

The Acting Speaker: You'll be thrown out.

Mr. Wilson: "Whereas the legacy of"—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the deputy House leader.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's the tradition of this place that we move in rotation and that members are recognized. The member from Oakville has clearly indicated his desire to read a petition on behalf of—

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Wilson: "Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to"—

Interjection.

Mr. Wilson: You can't threaten the Speaker. You cannot threaten the Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe–Grey. You're warned, Deputy House Leader. You'll be removed—any more.

Mr. Wilson: “Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada’s multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

“Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario’s diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.”

I’m very much in favour of this petition.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Fairness for Families in the 905 Belt

“Whereas the population of the greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

“Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units, with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions to social issues and human services needs; and

“Whereas the 2007-08 Ontario budget proposes aggressive and badly needed increases in operating funding to build and strengthen capacity in developmental and social services agencies and to invest in helping the young, the weak, the needy and the vulnerable; and

“Whereas the social and human services sectors in the 905 belt have historically received per capita funding far below that of other regions despite facing far greater growth in the populations they serve, and this per capita funding gap has increased in the last four years;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the 2007-08 Ontario budget implementing measures to strengthen Ontario’s families be passed without delay, and that the first priority for the allocation of new funding in meeting the government of Ontario’s commitment to fairness for families flow to the social services agencies serving cities within the 905 belt, and that funding for programs to serve the 905 belt be allocated to established or growing agencies located within the 905 belt.”

I agree with this petition.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): This is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada’s multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

“Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario’s diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.”

I support this petition and affix my signature.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Fairness for Families in the 905 Belt

“Whereas the population of the greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

“Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units, with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions to social issues and human services needs; and

“Whereas the 2007-08 Ontario budget proposes aggressive and badly needed increases in operating funding to build and strengthen capacity in developmental and social services agencies and to invest in helping the young, the weak, the needy and the vulnerable; and

“Whereas the social and human services sectors in the 905 belt have historically received per capita funding far below that of other regions despite facing far greater growth in the populations they serve, and this per capita funding gap has increased in the last four years;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the 2007-08 Ontario budget implementing measures to strengthen Ontario’s families be passed without delay, and that the first priority for the allocation of new funding in meeting the government of Ontario’s commitment to fairness for families flow to the social services agencies serving cities within the 905 belt, and that funding for programs to serve the 905 belt be allocated to established or growing agencies located within the 905 belt.”

I’m going to sign this petition and send it with page Julie.

1540

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition that was sent to me by Joyce MacDonald. A number of these signatures are from the Lifecare facility in Mississauga, where a number from her church volunteer every Monday evening. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I am pleased to affix my signature and pass it to Zachary for delivery to the table.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a similar petition to the one just read, which was sent to me at my constituency office. It's a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Omar, who is here with me today.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I rise, pursuant to standing order 55, which is of course one of my favourite standing orders, to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week. I would love one of the pages to come and share this with the table as well.

On Monday, May 7, 2007, in the afternoon we're going to have second reading of Bill 174, Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 218, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

On Tuesday, May 8, 2007, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 174, Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 212, the Education Amendment Act.

On Wednesday, May 9, 2007, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 187, the budget bill; in the evening, second reading of Bill 174, Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act.

On Thursday, May 10, 2007, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 103, the Independent Police Review Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 218, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I thank the members of the House. As with some of those who may have been present here last night, I began my speech and, like so many speeches, it was bifurcated, cut in half, but in fact it was me who bifurcated it last night, because it was my own motion. So I am here now today to deliver the second half of my speech.

Just to go over what was said on the last occasion, I spoke at first about the bill and about the lofty promises the government had made three and a half years ago, which had not been met and have not been kept within the body of this bill.

I went on to talk about the alternative voting methods that have been settled in the bill and the very real pitfalls that the government is introducing in this not-very-well-thought-out piece of legislation, which will allow the Chief Election Officer of Ontario during by-elections to experiment in a whole bunch of ways which have never been tried and are, quite frankly, fraught with dangers: things like Internet voting; mail-in ballots, with the complete disaster that has caused for the community of Kawartha Lakes in the last municipal election; multiple days of voting where voting day not be one day but may be many days—and I'm not talking about advance polling; I'm talking about multiple days of polling, of

actual election days—proxy voting and the like. It's not set out in the legislation, but it gives unfettered and free rein to the Chief Election Officer.

I talked about the thought process, which I do not believe was full and fulsome, in looking at the identification restrictions that will require all people seeking to vote to have two pieces of identification. I pointed out that Jean-Pierre Kingsley, the chief elections officer of Canada, has said that if done in Canada this will disenfranchise as many as 1.1 million voters, which would equate to about 400,000 in Ontario—people who do not have two pieces of identification.

I also pointed out the dichotomy and the wrong-headedness of the government in not requiring any pieces of identification of those who come with that card you get saying you have been enumerated. If you have that, you don't require any identification. I pointed out, I think forcefully, that prosecutions that have taken place for illegal voting in Ontario are primarily of people who find these notices of enumeration and take them in to vote one, two, five or 10 times during an election. They are the ones who are committing real voter fraud. You won't require a piece of identification for that, which seems to me very bizarre, considering that when you go into apartment buildings prior to an election, you can often see tens or hundreds of them thrown into the wastebasket because people have moved and the mail is not addressed to them, and that is literally how this happens.

I pointed out as well my own problems in trying to register to vote in not one, not two, but four elections in a row, where my name was put on a list in another riding. To this day, I have no idea how this happened, and every time, because I was hopefully a good citizen and went in to register, I had to have my name taken off the list in, I believe, York West and put into Beaches—East York, where I have resided in the same house for 25 years. The whole thing was fraught—I ended with the whole enumeration process and how we need to get back to enumeration, because if anything fails in elections in Ontario, it's the fact that we don't have an enumeration process and that as many as one quarter of the people who end up voting have to go in and register themselves because they're not on the list. That's what I had to say.

I closed, because I was frustrated yesterday, talking about the tie I was wearing. I think it caused some consternation to members opposite, because it was a South Park tie and they didn't like the fact that Kenny was often killed during the cartoon.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Kilkenny. Isn't that a beer?

Mr. Prue: It's a beer as well.

I had to reassure them, because I think they're not people who watch that show, that Kenny always resurrects himself and comes back alive and well, because, after all, he is a cartoon character.

I talked about wearing that tie and that I should have worn this tie. So today I wore this tie. For those of you who cannot see it, I tried to match the day. This is a tie of Vincent Van Gogh, a man who was very troubled—a

brilliant painter but very troubled because he had tinnitus; he had ringing in his ears. The ringing drove him really, really beyond the pale on some occasions; on one occasion, even to cut off an ear to try to stop that terrible affliction.

Today, of course, it's curable. But I am not sure that it's going to be curable today, because we again asked the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, because the Premier was not here, to apologize for the comments that I have taken personal affront at. Some of the most pointed questions to the minister have come from me. The first questions asked about the Iranian connection came from me. The first questions asking about the Bangladeshi group in my riding came from me. I'm sure my friend from Mississauga West will forgive me, but the first questions about that one came from me as well.

I take umbrage at the fact that the Premier alluded that I might somehow be a racist for asking those questions. I take umbrage because for 20 years, almost 21, I worked in the immigration department of this great country. I worked here in Ontario but also out west and in the Maritimes—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Speaker: We appreciate the intent of the member, but question period may have been the time to raise that. Standing order 23(b)(i) suggests that he should discuss the matter under discussion, and frankly, I was enjoying his discussion. He was doing a great job, especially the part about his ties.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for that. It's not a point of order.

Continue, please.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much. I will be getting to the point very rapidly.

As I was explaining, I worked for the immigration department for some 20 years. During that 20 years, the immigration department of Canada landed some five million people in this country; that is, five million permanent residents. I'm very proud to have worked for the department that did that. They came from all over the world, and we never cared and we never questioned the kinds of things that this Premier questioned. During that same period, we admitted to this country more than 20 million visitors, and we never questioned the things that the Premier has questioned. During that period, we allowed hundreds of thousands of students to come to the province of Ontario from all over the world, and no questions were ever raised as the Premier has raised.

I have to tell you, I'm very frustrated with what has happened here today. I am so frustrated that I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Beaches—East York has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1551 to 1621.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Prue has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing. Thank you. Can you take your seats, please.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 9; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: That's twice now that I've interrupted my own speech. I will try not to do that too many more times.

I described what was done on the last day. I commend the minister for being here. I hope she's had an opportunity to read what I said last night. I take all of those things to heart, and I think that major changes need to be made to this legislation if it is to survive and actually do what it is intended to do.

There are a couple more points that I think are important and need to be raised. The first involves the blackout period. That is the period during which parties and others—third parties—are not allowed to advertise. Under the current legislation, there is a blackout imposed upon all parties: They may not advertise until 22 days before the election and then must cease the advertising on the day before the election and election day itself. So there is a window of approximately three weeks in which political parties and others who wish to advertise can do so. That process, in my opinion, has served Canada and Ontario very well.

What is proposed in this legislation, I think, is a retrograde step, because it blacks out paid political and third party advertising for two days only, those two days being the day before election day and election day itself. I don't think that this is a good step, because what this is going to allow is, first of all, for third parties to begin—because they know the date; everyone in the world knows it's October 10, 2007, that we're going to vote. So this will allow people with big pockets, whether it be large businesses, unions, corporations, the citizens' alliance—what was the one where you signed the pledge not to raise taxes?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I didn't sign it.

Mr. Prue: Okay, but the Liberals signed the pledge not to raise taxes.

I am convinced that that group is going to go out, because they can and they will, and start advertising for a considerable period in advance of the election itself.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Have they started yet?

Mr. Prue: No—well, they probably have. But by extending the blackout date to unlimited times before election day minus one and election day itself, you have opened up what I consider to be a Pandora's box. You are allowing third party groups to start advertising for or against the government immediately, for or against the

opposition immediately, to raise questions which will be very difficult for any party or parties to defend.

You also make it incredibly difficult, if you are truly trying to democratize the process, for smaller parties to compete. It is hard enough to raise the funds to put on television or radio or commercial advertising in the media for three weeks if you are a party like the NDP, and even worse if you are a party that is smaller, like the Family Coalition Party or the Greens, to try to muster the amounts of money necessary to run advertising. Under the current legislation, which is confined to a three-week window—E minus 22 to E minus 1—that's a very difficult and daunting task for any party, especially ones that are starting up, to get the kind of money to compete in that window. Now you are opening it up to make it literally impossible for the smaller parties to compete with the larger ones. I include my own almost there. I include my own because it will become very, very difficult to raise the millions upon millions of dollars to get into the media, to get into television and radio advertising, to pay for the professional people who produce that, who target their audiences, all of those things. I think the blackout period should remain. Quite frankly, the blackout period has not hurt the electoral process; it sparks a lot of interest in the election, albeit in the last three weeks, and has a cut-off date that ensures that people have 48 hours in which to breathe and to think and take it all in before they actually go out and cast their ballot.

This will, I tend to think, make Canadian politics very akin to that in the United States. Now, I don't have to tell the members of this House, if you watch the American elections, particularly every four years when the presidential elections coincide in that country, you will see advertising throughout the entire year. You'll have the primaries with all of the advertising. You'll have, starting in January, advertising going on in each one of the states and for the presidential elections. You will have people forced to spend in order to compete and to be on a level playing field with their foes. They spend millions upon millions of dollars for Senate races, for the House of Representatives, for the presidency and vice-presidency, even for judges, even in some places for dog catchers. You have to spend those enormous amounts of money.

I am very worried, given our experience here in Canada and given that we pride ourselves on listening to politicians, we pride ourselves on going to all-candidates meetings to weigh one against another, we pride ourselves on the whole political array of looking at the pamphlets, of watching the leaders' debates, of doing all that is necessary to inform oneself, that we will, through this particular medium, with a blackout that is extended infinitely—there's no blackout starting today, so that if advertising wants to be done today, it can be, and it is not subject to the period under question from the date the writ is issued, probably sometime in early September until election day itself. So this causes me a great deal of concern. I would ask the minister to look very carefully at scrapping this particular provision and returning

instead to, and keeping or modifying in some very small way, what has served Canada and Ontario very well over many, many years, and that is a blackout period that allows only three weeks for paid political advertising and three weeks for the parties and the leaders to get their message out over the airwaves. That will, of course, be three weeks only for those third parties that have big pockets to get their message out as well and to stop the sniping from the sidelines for a much longer and extended period.

I wanted to talk as well about the polling times. Now, I am mindful that the polling has been extended to 9 to 9, albeit 8 to 8 in those parts of Ontario which are west of Highway 90 in the northwest. That's primarily one riding. But there it is: 8 to 8 in that riding.

1630

I'm wondering why 9 to 9 was chosen. I had an opportunity to read what the Chief Election Officer of Ontario had to say: Most of the polling booths were busy after 5 o'clock; they're busy from 5 to about 7. But I want to tell the minister that when I go out to the polling stations, as I have in probably 30 or 40 elections in my life because I am a political person like all of you, when I go out in a municipal election, a provincial election or a federal election, that's true: Between 5 and 7 is the key time. But after about 7 or 7:30, I challenge you to go in there and find a whole lot of people. Between 7:15, 7:20 and 8 o'clock, the number of people who are in the polling station at that time is no greater than it is in the afternoon or the morning.

I'm just questioning whether or not it is serving as a benefit to extend it from 9 to 9. Surely a better benefit would be to extend it from 8 in the morning till 8 at night, in my view. The reason I'm suggesting it, if you're going to do that, is because many people in this province work shift work, of course. Many people do not have an opportunity, once they leave to go to work, once they've dropped the kids off at school, once they go away, to get back in time. I know that the law allows—or did; I don't know if it still does under this legislation—three hours to vote. Even if it allows three hours to vote, someone who commutes, say, from Barrie to Toronto—and there are thousands upon thousands of people who do that, who get up in the morning and who need to get the kids off to school, get on the 400, drive down and go to work, and then try to make their way back—even if they're given three hours to vote at 5 o'clock and try to make their way back, they'd have a hard time, so maybe 9 would help them. But on the converse, if they work, say, from 10 or 11, they won't be able to get back. They need the time in the morning—many of these people, I would suggest—to have an opportunity to go out and cast the ballot after they've dropped the kids off, after they've done what's necessary to get themselves ready and before they take off on the commute.

I would think that opening and extending the polls from 8 in the morning to 8 at night, if you're only going to do 12 hours, would invariably make more sense. If you want to make it 13 hours, I'd agree: Leave it open until 9

at night. But please think very carefully about opening at 8 o'clock in the morning, because people can do that, as I've just explained, while taking their kids to school or getting ready to go out. They cannot always make it back at night. That would make a whole lot of sense to me.

There is a provision in there about the advance polling going from 13 days to six—

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Six to 13.

Mr. Prue: From six to 13. Sorry, I've got it backwards. I don't think that's a bad thing. It certainly gives options to people to exercise their vote. I'm not going to really comment on that. It's just another option. It keeps it open. It gives an extra few days for people if they haven't had an opportunity to make up their minds to do so, and gives people latitude, if they're going on vacation or anything else, without going through all the bother of proxy votes, which, I will tell you, by the time they're out of the country are usually more hassle than what they're worth. So many people don't bother to do it.

I'm mindful of the time again. There was one other aspect I really wanted to deal with on some level, and that was the whole potential problem of mischief around the election. I raise this mischief not so much from what is in this bill but what is in this bill in combination with another one that has been passed. Combined with Bill 62, which is the lower-threshold-for-party-status bill, you need only run two people now. Two people have to agree, "We will be Party X," and they are now Party X. They have all the rights and privileges of the established parties in Ontario, as maybe they should. But they in themselves, two people, can now constitute a political party. This may create some mischief.

I am mindful about what happened when this same provision was allowed to go forward in Manitoba. It is perhaps the most perverse and telling case of what may be in store for the province of Ontario by allowing as few as two people to constitute a political party. You will remember what happened in Manitoba. They made it easier for parties to get funding and get their names on the ballot. But what this did was not just to encourage new little parties to establish themselves but political operatives to establish parties solely for the purpose of siphoning off votes from opponents. What happened in Manitoba was absolutely bizarre. Of course, the people got caught, so now it's quite the story. It showed what happened with this deeply flawed system, and it was exacerbated by the first-past-the-post. There was a party established in Manitoba, with a couple of people running, called the Independent Native Voice. It was a party and it ran in Manitoba with the sole purpose of siphoning off the votes of the New Democratic Party candidates in a couple of ridings.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): No. Really?

Mr. Prue: Absolutely.

It was established by the Conservative Party. It was established and was funded and everything else. It became quite the fiasco in Manitoba. It became a real cause célèbre, and at the end they had to call in a judge. They called in Judge Alfred Monnin, and, responding to the

mounting evidence of improper behaviour, he ruled in his ruling that the local Progressive Conservative organizers were guilty of inducing at least one candidate to contest the election, and in his summary Monnin described the behaviour of the Conservative organizers as “unethical” and “morally reprehensible.”

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: That was the ruling of the judge; that’s not what I’m saying.

In a nutshell, what happened is that they went out and found a couple of First Canadians to contest elections in NDP-held ridings and to siphon off the vote, hopefully by getting other First Canadians to vote for them who would normally vote for the NDP. It was quite spectacular, but it was unethical behaviour, not so much of somebody intent upon winning an election or putting forward a platform of a new political party or establishing a new political party, but it was an offshoot of a political party that wanted to do damage by simply removing some of the natural constituency of the incumbent.

I would state that the judge probably said it best in his one line, which I’d like to read into the record. Recalling the testimony of these high-profile Tories who perpetrated the vote-rigging effort, the retired jurist wrote that “in all my years on the bench I never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry.” That’s when they were trying to explain what they were doing.

So I caution the minister: In establishing and setting up Bill 62—and I know why you did it; you did it because of court decisions and because you probably didn’t have any other option but to set a minimum bar. But, having done that, and in conjunction with this particular bill, you are going to see that there is a great opportunity for mischief; there is a great opportunity with a lower threshold for people to do or to attempt to do what was done so brutally badly, if I must say, in Manitoba, that they got caught and it itself became an election issue and the judge made that judgment.

I have tried to be as constructive as I can on this particular bill. To reiterate, there are some things to which I do not object. There is, of course, the lofty Liberal premise and promises made before the last election that they were going to have citizens’ juries, that they were going to make sure the campaigns were not dragged out, that the campaigns were fair. I am not sure that this bill has met all of those tests.

But I would like the minister especially to look very carefully at not granting holus-bolus the Chief Election Officer the opportunity to experiment in by-elections, because if that includes, as I said yesterday, votes on the Internet, I would be highly suspicious, given how easy it is to manipulate Internet voting. We have seen how that happens in votes that don’t matter, where people call in and go from computer to computer, voting four, five and six times and voting the next day, and all of those things. I would caution her against the use of mail-in ballots if we’re not going to cause anything to happen like what happened in the city of Kawartha Lakes, because that is a

subject now before the courts where literally 40% of all the cast ballots were declared ineligible because the instructions on how to fill them out were handled, in my view, so poorly. I would caution giving the CEO the responsibility or the option of coming up with multiple voting days, as they do in some countries where you vote two, three or four days. I’m not talking about advance polls, but leaving the polls open for more than one day, which is a possibility.

The whole question of proxy voting: I would ask you to carefully look at—if you are going to ask for identification, you should ask for it from everyone who votes, not just those who do not have the “vote at” card. Jean-Pierre Kingsley said that would disenfranchise about 1.1 million people in Canada if that was required from every voter. That would be about 400,000 people in Ontario, if he is right. I have no other authority which to quote. That’s the only one who has come forward to talk about that, and he is a little worried.

If you do do it, please do it for everyone. I’ve said it twice, but I want to say it again: Every election, when I go into apartment buildings in my riding, when those “vote at” cards are sent out by the Chief Election Officer, I can see 10 or 15 or 100 in garbage bins outside of the mailrooms. People get them, they’re not addressed to them—those people don’t live there anymore—and they put them in the garbage. Those people who show up with those voting cards only and when you do not know—I am very suspicious. I know the polling officers are very suspicious and I do know that when and if people are caught for voting multiple times, it’s usually through that avenue and not through having four or five false pieces of identification. It’s that avenue. The “vote at” card, in and of itself, should not be sufficient.

I ask you again to go back to enumeration. I ask you to enumerate everyone and not to do what is in this legislation, which allows for targeted enumeration only. We have an obligation to make sure that every person is registered in a fair and just way. I gave the other day the example of how I found myself, four times—in four elections in a row—registered in another riding. I know I’m not alone and I know that there are lots of people who’ve been left off. I do know, which I didn’t say the other day, that when I was left off, I got a voter’s card at my home for my mother-in-law, who had been deceased for two years and about whom we had informed. So, had I been less than an honest citizen, I could have had some other older person go out and vote in her stead, even though she no longer was alive. That’s the kind of thing that happens now due to lack of enumeration. I did quote the other day the learned professor from the University of Montreal talking about how the lack of enumeration in and of itself causes hundreds of thousands of people not to vote.

That would be most of what I wanted to say. I have been reminded by my colleagues in the official opposition that we are still very angry with the government for the lack of answers. I think that I have said enough on this particular bill. I have spoken for almost an hour. The

minister seems to have acknowledged that I have kept myself as best as I could to what is in the bill and what needs to be improved. I trust that she has heard that and will make the necessary improvements.

Having said that, we do not have answers on what is the important issue of the day and I still have not, as of yet, had an apology from either the Premier or the Minister of Citizenship on a subject at which I take great umbrage, having worked in the immigration department for some 20 years.

On that, I'm calling for adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Prue has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1644 to 1714.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Prue has moved the adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing. Please be seated.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing. Please be seated.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 6; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The Chair recognizes the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: I've been asked to talk some more about my ties. I don't know whether that was just in jest. But I do want to tell you that today the member from Willowdale came to my office. I had promised that I would share with him a bottle of wine that I had made. He was mightily impressed, I have to tell you, with the cover of a Château le Député. He told me something that I thought was absolutely amazing, and perhaps it even takes on biblical proportions. He says that he is going to share this with the entire Liberal caucus. You can see, in stories in the Bible, how not only was water turned into wine, but at the wedding feast literally one bottle was served among thousands of people. Perhaps the 68 or 69 members of the Liberal Party can all enjoy many, many tastes.

In any event, I don't know whether I have too much more to add on this bill. I spoke for most of the hour and think I made the points that needed—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): We want to hear more.

Mr. Prue: You'll have a chance to talk about it, and I'll respond.

But I do want to say that I was very proud to have caused the bells to be rung here twice today. I did so in honour of Vincent Van Gogh, who is of course one of my favourite artists. As I said, he suffered. He had ringing in the ears. I wore this tie in honour of him today because for the last couple of days we have had the bells repeatedly rung. So when I went home last night, I swear I was trying to watch the news, but I kept hearing these bells ringing in my ear. I thought, "I really have to search out this tie. I really have to wear his self-portrait. I have to be

able to say in this Legislature that his spirit is with us. It is evoked in this chamber. We remember him only too well and the sufferings that he had."

When you next hear the bells ring, as I'm sure you are going to—because I know there are members in other parties who are very angry at the lack of what they consider to be forthright answers and the lack of an apology coming from the Premier, and most of us feel we are owed one. The bells will continue to ring, and when you hear them—I'm reminded of the old Christmas movie: When a bell rings, an angel has got his wings. Perhaps in here you should remember that when the bell rings, Vincent Van Gogh's spirit lives on. Although he was mightily troubled, he produced some wonderful work. May we all aspire to do the same.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to rise today and add two minutes to the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007. I guess it's really one of those bills that you either agree with or you don't. You either want to see some improvements made to the way we elect our provincial officials in Ontario or you don't. Certainly I don't think there can be any argument that the proposals that are contained within the proposed bill would make the system a much better system, would make it easier for people to vote, would increase the number of advance polling days, for example, and extend the hours that you can vote.

I think quite a lot of us try to get into high schools and elementary schools. I don't think anybody around here would deny that there has been an increasing lack of interest in our political system by the young people of this province. I think what we're trying to do here is to encourage more people to get involved in the political system. We're trying to encourage young people to re-enter and have a renewed interest in what happens here at Queen's Park. We're trying to improve the integrity of the system and at the same time trying to get more people out to vote, trying to increase the turnout on election day.

I was wondering what the people in the audience were thinking when the bells were ringing a few minutes ago, whether that enhanced the reputation of this place or whether perhaps the ringing of the bells does the opposite. I don't know what the answer to that would be. I think we'd all hold personal opinions on that. My own opinion is that it doesn't do the dignity of this place any good.

I think what we should all be trying to do is to make this place work better. I've seen enough around here today and on previous days that would make people think, "Do you know what? There's a lot of room for improvement here." This is a very small step in that regard.

1720

Mr. Chudleigh: Talking about the dignity of this place, I'm surprised at the member from Oakville's tenacity and that he was able to get through that phrase without choking on it. One of the most important things that happen in this place is that the opposition and the

government have respect for the taxpayer's dollar, the taxpayer's dollar that is being shovelled out the door by the Liberals and by the Minister of Citizenship. It's totally disrespectful of the taxpayers of Ontario. I'm surprised the member from Oakville takes that attitude. In fact, that's probably the subject of a good press release.

However, the member from Beaches–East York made a wonderful presentation about this bill. He talked about Van Gogh and his wonderful tie. I've always referred to him as "Van Gogh," but I stand corrected. I will call him "Van Gogh" from here on. I've always wondered why the painter Vincent Van Gogh cut off his ear. I think it might have been because of unrequited love. I would like to believe that. I'm kind of a romantic, I suppose, at heart.

Interjections.

Mr. Chudleigh: The members of the opposition find that difficult to believe.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): You are the opposition.

Mr. Chudleigh: The members of the government. Oh, yes, I keep getting confused on that subject. I think about the future so much.

Interjections.

Mr. Chudleigh: Yes, you're still there. October 10 is coming. I wonder if in the wrap-up perhaps the member for Beaches–East York could inform us on how Van Gogh lost his ear and why. He's wearing the tie. He must know. Perhaps the bells will ring yet again for Vincent Van Gogh, that wonderful romantic.

Ms. Horwath: I'm very pleased to have a minute and a half or two minutes to comment on the lead-off speech on this bill of my colleague and our critic in this area, the member for Beaches–East York. I have to tell you that, notwithstanding some of the ringing of bells, our critic has done a very good job of putting some of the substantive issues on the table in regard to the problems with this particular bill. The thing that's difficult for me as a member to watch happening is the government waxing eloquent about all of their intentions on this or that or the other thing—in this case, democracy and democratic renewal in this province—and then to see them bring legislation that really does nothing of the sort. It's kind of disconcerting, to say the least.

I know the member from Beaches–East York, over tonight and last night when he had the opportunity to speak to the bill, raised issues such as the permanent voters' list and the fact that the government purports to try to address the reduction in voter participation by putting some pieces of this bill in place that would require, for example, ID to be presented, that would require certain other things to occur, on the one hand saying that they were actually doing this for the purpose of increasing voter turnout, when in fact everyone around this chamber would know that we need to have enumeration. We need to make sure that we are enumerating on a regular basis. That's what has a much greater impact on people's ability to vote and their ability to go to the polls

and cast their ballot without having to worry about the rigours that are described in the bill.

I want to congratulate our member and critic for the work he has done. I look forward to speaking to this bill on my own behalf fairly soon.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a pleasure to add my comments. I have to be fair. I guess I was supposed to make comments on what the member for Beaches–East York said, but I was having difficulty concentrating because of the number of bells in between. While we're supposed to be here, I really try to listen, and then we get interrupted. He's right: Those bells keep on ringing. As much as I would like to have some retention of what he said, it made it very difficult.

Having said that, though, I think we should be really proud that we're making a step forward to look at different ways to engage the public in the democratic process. I'm a strong believer in the democratic process, and I want to take the opportunity to congratulate and thank the citizens' assembly for the work they did. Here's somebody totally independent—I met the person in my riding. She phoned and wanted to talk with me. She really got engaged. I think they're coming forward with some good ideas, and the public will decide.

Just last week I met with representatives of Fair Vote Canada, and they had some very good ideas. I think it's really interesting that these folks are coming forward. At the end of the day, whatever this legislation—although it has been criticized by the opposition that it's missing this, it's missing that, it's no good for that or whatever—we're engaging a certain portion of the citizens to think about elections. I attended the meeting they had in Belleville. I was recognized and was asked to make a comment. My comment was that at the end of the day, whatever process we use, whatever's out there, whatever the people of Ontario decide, we need to make sure that people come out and vote. At the end of the day, that is really what counts.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Prue: I'm getting a little history lesson here from the member from Halton, but I would like to thank the member from Oakville, the member from Halton, the member from Hamilton East and the member from Northumberland.

Just to answer some of the questions: The member from Oakville talked about the ringing of the bells. The ringing of the bells unfortunately is the only application which the opposition still has to show its displeasure. There are no longer opportunities, as you might know, to filibuster; there are no longer opportunities to do those kinds of things that were done in past Parliaments. The only opportunity that is still left to the opposition is this. Would that we had another thing to do, because I would admit to you that it may be counterproductive but we have to somehow impress upon the members of the government that the opposition needs to be listened to. That is in fact what makes parliamentary democracy work. That's why we have a Speaker. The Speaker is there not to protect the majority but to protect and enhance the

rights of the minority so that they may be heard. All we are trying to do is to be heard, and we are trying through the only avenue left; that is, ringing the bells to make the ministers come to heel.

On the question of the member from Halton, he likes to think it's unrequited love. I wish him all the best. My own understanding is that it was ringing in the ears that eventually drove poor Vincent Van Gogh mad and caused him to take his own life. It was very sad, but he did leave us a legacy of some of the finest paintings of the 19th century.

I thank the member from Hamilton East for her comments. She hit on all the points, so she must have been listening to my speech.

In 15 seconds, I don't know whether the member from Northumberland listened or not—perhaps the bells did interfere—but there is nothing in this bill that deals with the citizens' assembly, MMP or anything else. I thank you for your comments all the same, but it was not included in my speech at all.

The Acting Speaker: Time for further debate.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I want to preface my remarks by commenting about what Speaker Brown was saying, about how it really is important, if we're going to set a new tone in this place, that we always address all of our comments through the Speaker. I just want to let you know, Mr. Speaker, that I agree with that ruling. I think that's very important in this instance, that that is something we need to do.

I want to preface my remarks again. I was listening to my colleague Bill Mauro, the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. Mr. Speaker, you know him well. I thought he gave a wonderful speech last night about how the question of democratic participation is dealing—

Interjection.

Mr. Wilkinson: I'm going to get to that in a second—with the question of—well, first I'd better say that I'm sharing my time with my good friend the member from York West, Mario Sergio, a wonderful chap who has much more experience.

As I was saying, my good friend the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan—I'll just refer to him by his riding name, as we should do in this place: speak through the Speaker, talk about members by their riding name. I think it is important to say that he talked about the fact that if we want people to respect the democratic process, we have to be able to respect ourselves. That's very important.

1730

I was very glad to hear that because I say that this bill is all about driving change. It's very important that we drive change, because the people of Ontario have said to us that they want some reforms, and if you're not part of a government that's willing to drive those changes home, it doesn't happen. That's why it is so important that we on this side of the House believe that this is electoral reform that really needs to be driven home—always, always, always.

I have some concerns as a rural member. I think some of the changes we're talking about are good. We're

talking about extending polling hours on election day by an additional hour. I think that's very important in a rural riding where you have to drive so much. I know as a member I have to drive a great deal within my vast riding. I don't have the biggest one, but I have a very large riding and I have to drive. If I have to drive, it means my constituents have to drive. If they have to drive on polling day, an extra hour is important.

I also know that we're increasing the number of advance poll days, Mr. Speaker. I say directly to you that we're increasing those days from six to 13, again making it easier for people to vote—very, very important because of the vast differences in our ridings. We've even said that in by-elections the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Hollins, a very respected officer of this Legislature, will be able to look at new technology as a way of piloting some new technology. This is the 21st century, and it is important that we contemplate that.

I look at my own riding, and on this very theme about driving—let's think about it. We have our good friend the leader of the third party, the member for Kenora-Rainy River. How large is his riding? Mr. Hampton's riding is 336,000 square kilometres. It's huge.

Interjection: The size of France.

Mr. Wilkinson: I think that's bigger than Italy, almost the size of France. My own riding of Perth-Middlesex is—let's just see. I know my friends at the legislative library have helped me. My riding is just one one-hundredth of that size; 3,730 square kilometres. That's a big riding in southwestern Ontario.

Then we have, say, a riding that would be a middle-sized riding—

Interjection.

Mr. Wilkinson: I'm not going to get into that. I'd say, something in between my kind of rural riding with an urban centre like Stratford, just like a city riding. Then we have cities like London. The riding of Barrie, for example, is a good one. That riding is only 664 square kilometres. That's a very interesting riding, though it has a lot of people in it. Then we have the member from Toronto-Danforth. His riding is only—how big is that? His riding is only 12 square kilometres. So obviously distance is a factor of all of these different ridings.

Some of us as members get reimbursed for our expenses in our ridings because we have to drive a lot. Mr. Speaker, I know that in your riding of Halton you have that as well, the need to drive. Some members drive more than others, which means our constituents have to drive more if they're going to be able to get to the polling station. That's very important.

There are some members—and I say to you with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, if you have, say, 664 square kilometres and you get a payment from the House of some \$22,000, that's about 66,000 kilometres driven in a riding of 664 square kilometres. That means you visit each and every square kilometre some 10 times in a year. That's amazing.

This House is very good. We support those things because we believe in democracy and the need to do that.

Those numbers are vastly different among members. I know that in regard to the minister's bill, I want to say to the member for Hamilton Mountain, the Honourable Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, our Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs—and she's in charge of the Democratic Renewal Secretariat—that she has brought forward a bill that I support. My only concern is about the size of the ridings. I know the citizens' assembly has a report that's coming, but they've already decided to talk about the mixed member proportional system. My understanding is that it would reduce the projected 107 seats down to 90, and then there would be additional seats, another 30 or so, which would mean that particularly rural ridings would be even bigger. Mine would be bigger. I can tell you, my constituents have to drive sometimes over an hour to see or I have to drive to them—an hour in one direction, an hour in another direction, an hour in yet another direction. It's so good to see the Speaker back because I know he believes in this more than others about the need of the various sizes of those ridings. I'm so glad I was able to put on the record for all, using examples of how many square kilometres there are in a riding and how often people drive—it's so important. But we have to drive change. It's very, very important that we do that.

One of the suggestions in this bill is that we put the names of our political parties, or the fact that we are an independent, right on the ballot. That has been debated in this House for a long, long time. There are members who are on different sides, but I know that in the federal House, the candidates and their party affiliations are there. That's a pretty important thing for a voter to know when they go into the ballot box. Disclosure is a hallmark of our voting system, particularly if we're going to have to vote on a number of things.

They may have now, under the new system, if it were to pass, two votes, not one. Every time they vote, they will have to vote twice. So it's important for us to drive home change. As a rural member—and I'm sure we have some members that are mixed city and somewhat rural members. They understand how important it is for us to get out there and constantly drive within our ridings, seeing our constituents over and over again. It doesn't matter how much money you spend, the Legislature and the taxpayers will pick up that cost. They will reimburse that cost every time.

We have a great system. If the ridings get bigger, those expenses are going to go up too. There's no doubt about it. If you look at the records, there are extremes about some who don't drive much within a riding and others who are constantly on the road, working on that. That's so important. A good public needs to know that. If we look at this, we have even bigger rural ridings. If we have even bigger rural ridings, that is going to be a challenge. I know I'm going to want to get some more information.

How will I get that information? Under this act, there will be a public education campaign paid for by taxpayers and administered by a neutral third party—no political interference whatsoever—to talk about the pros

and cons of that. I look at this and it says here that Elections Ontario would be given the responsibility of running a neutral public education campaign in advance of any referendum. For example, there is one that could be happening on electoral form on October 10, and it would be run by the Chief Election Officer, who is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly. John Hollins, a wonderful chap, is doing a fine job, as are all the officers of this assembly.

It's a good fit with the general communications authority of the Chief Electoral Officer because his job, or perhaps one day his successor's job, her job, is to ensure that votes are held fairly. Despite my reservations as a rural member—and probably even from urban members who drive constantly within their ridings, over and over again, reaching each and every square kilometre maybe 10 times in one year, which is amazing. I know I can't do that. There just aren't enough waking hours in a year to be able to do that. It is so important that we drive home that change.

Now it's important for us to listen to one of the longest-serving members in this House, my good friend the member from York West.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from York West.

Mr. Sergio: I'd like to compliment my colleague Mr. Wilkinson from Perth-Middlesex. He's not so new himself in this House and he did a wonderful job addressing some of the contents of Bill 218.

This is a good bill, not because of the contents of the bill, but this is a very important bill that we've been talking about in this House. We are doing second reading now, but I wonder how many people are really tuned in to the content of the bill, with the intent of the bill and with the wonderful work that the citizens' assembly has been doing in getting all kinds of information and in bringing some changes to the way we elect people to this wonderful House.

What did they do? They have delivered, very recently, their opinion. They have delivered one opinion and they delivered a final report.

Ms. Horwath: The bill's not about that.

1740

Mr. Sergio: Oh yes, it is. It's all part of the bill. On the 15th we are going to have another, final report.

But what does Bill 218 really say? It would be unfair to say that we have sifted through every word of the bill. Certainly, I cannot do it justice in 10 minutes, but let me say some of the important things that this bill contains. I do hope that prior to October 10, the people of Ontario will have a fairly good reason why, when they go to the polls, they will be aware that they will be going to the polls for two very important reasons. One is, yes, to vote for the member and the party of their choice. This is one of the very few times that the democratic system allows the members, those able to vote, to go and exercise their right.

The other, very important, is the so-called referendum. The people listening and watching today may say, "What

the heck are they talking about, referendum?" They know the date, or they should know the date by now, when the next provincial election is, which is October 10. Originally it was October 4 and now it's October 10, but I wonder if the mass of the people in Ontario will be wondering and saying, "What is the referendum and why? When did this come out?"—and so forth.

Sometimes governments are accused of not listening to the public or the opposition or whatever. We have to say that some time ago the government said, "All right, let's look at it." I think we made it part of our previous campaign to say, let's look at it and see if we can bring some improvements to how people go to vote and to see why, for a number of reasons, people don't go to vote. Never mind those that go to vote, what about those that don't go to vote, period?

Part of this bill deals with that as well. When we say, okay, now we're going to give the powers to the Chief Electoral Officer to take the power on and to make sure that he will initiate this wonderful campaign telling the people of Ontario, those eligible to vote—and, especially, an extra-good campaign, and I think it's a good point in the bill—approaching especially the schools and those students that are nearly of voting age, passing along all the information as to why they should go to vote and provide them with all the information. I think that's important.

I think the second part of my presentation would be on this referendum. An election is an election. We know that. We know what goes on prior to the election. We know what goes on the day of the election. But the referendum I think is very important, because this will change, perhaps for a long time—or maybe it won't change anything at all because the referendum will call for a percentage of the voters who will have to exercise their right. Unless we get a particular percentage, you know what? Nothing is going to happen. We go back to the existing system, which I have to say has been serving Ontarians fairly well.

The committee has travelled far and near, investigating other ways of getting our people to vote. Yes, we have heard those saying, "You know, we should give more voice to everybody and so forth." I think the committee has addressed that particular aspect of the bill. There are a number of points. I will try and identify at least some of the most important points in the bill, because I only have about four minutes left.

The important points are these: how to make it easier for people to go to vote and how to encourage more people to go to vote. I think this is one of the things where people say, "Well, maybe this, maybe that." I think the bill will be addressing that.

Improving the electoral process per se—more integrity, if you will, to the process. Often during particular campaigns, we hear a lot of negativity that does go on, so I think we have given direction to the Chief Electoral Officer to really delve into that and bring some good recommendations.

Make some improvements to the voters' list: God forbid, we have heard all kinds of accusations with respect to voters' lists and so forth.

One of the important parts as well is to regulate advertising by third parties: who is running the campaign, who is paying for the campaign, who is paying for what, and transparency. If we're going to make some changes, I think we have to really look into who is paying. We want to know—transparency. I think the bill looks at that as well.

Yes, it's nothing new, but I think it's time to look at improving the system of voting as well, not only when you go to vote in the poll itself, but the counting of the votes as well. I come from the municipal sector, where we had the automatic voting system. While we said, "Hey, everything went well. It was wonderful, it was speedy. The polls closed at 8 o'clock and at 8:30 we knew already who won and who lost," there were some hitches. I think that's one area to be addressed.

One important aspect is this so-called blackout, or up to when you and I or the political parties are allowed to go to the radio, newspaper, TV and stuff like that. I think the bill calls for maintaining a blackout during the voting day and the day before and so forth. In our case, it's already known because we already know the voting date. We already know the voting day, so I think everyone should be aware of that and take it from there. So there is no reason to get into an argument with respect to advertising and so forth.

It is a good piece of legislation. A lot of this goes into the polling station itself on election day. The Chief Electoral Officer can't be in every poll on election day. There are people doing their work, and I think one aspect of that we'll have to look at is to have those people well qualified, that they understand the work they have to do. We've told the other scrutineers in the polling station that indeed the best of the job is done, because a lot of the so-called hanky-panky goes on exactly in the voting station—either inside or immediately outside the voting station.

I think what's important from now until—hopefully the House will approve everything and we'll get on with this Bill 218.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Second and third reading today.

Mr. Sergio: Yes, indeed. We get on with it and then we can initiate this wonderful educational campaign and tell the people of Ontario really not what's expected on October 10, which is voting day, but with respect, more importantly, with this referendum. I think that people watching should be starting to ask themselves, "What is it? I want to know more." I think it's a very important piece of legislation. The consequences—we're not going to go into the various details because we haven't got time, but pros or cons, I think there are consequences. People should be well aware why we have done so, why we will have a referendum on October 10. I would hope that indeed we can move on and allow the Chief Electoral—

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member from Halton.

Mr. Chudleigh: Thank you very much for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member from Hamilton East.

Ms. Horwath: I don't think the member spoke to the bill, but I'm pleased to make a comment on it.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much. I think it was quite a tag team.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member from Guelph–Wellington.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): Thank you. I'm delighted to comment on this speech. One of the things that has been, I think, a challenge for people who are new to running in a riding is that it often happens that people in an urban riding don't know what party that candidate may represent. So I think, as the members both pointed out, that it will be very helpful to have the identification of that candidate's party on the ballot, so that people who are new to the riding, or for candidates who are new to the ballot, have an opportunity to have a look at which party that person actually belongs to.

1750

I think it's also very important that as we look at this whole issue of the referendum—and certainly one of the things that people commented on following the referendum in BC was the whole question of whether or not people really understood, when they were looking at an electoral system, what they were really choosing. It was a complicated system, but there seemed to be a lot of confusion around what the decision was that they were making and what the consequences were of the decision.

If this act we are discussing now passes, the electoral officer, the Chief Election Officer of the province of Ontario, will be explicitly charged with running an advertising campaign that will be neutral but that will give the people of Ontario information about the current system of government that we have and about the proposed system of government. It's very important that people get out and participate. This is really quite—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It's time for the response.

Mr. Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleagues. I know the opposition were particularly brief in this round. It makes you wonder. Perhaps they are eager to get home. Perhaps, but I know that it's important for us to get to the government's business, so I want to talk particularly about my colleague the member from Guelph–Wellington.

I was doing a bit of a review and I know, for example, that the size of the riding of the member for Guelph–Wellington—we're talking about sizes of ridings and the requirement—is almost identical, for example, to the size of your riding, Mr. Speaker. The square kilometres are almost exactly the same, so I think it's a very good com-

parison. The member was telling me that it helped her to understand the relationship between that, because as I mentioned before, it's all about the size of the riding. My concern, valid that I think that it is, the size—I know the good member from Oxford and I have about the same size of riding. It's a bit smaller—I understand that—and mine is a bit bigger, but these things happen. It's important that if rural ridings get bigger, and I'm sure the member from Oxford would agree, it's harder and harder for us. There are more hours that we must spend in our cars, driving and driving around those ridings over and over again, and it means that our constituents have to spend more and more time. It's great that the Legislature pays us to be able to drive within our ridings, drive back and forth between our ridings and actually do legislative business around, but when I look at ridings like Barrie–Bradford–Simcoe—or is it Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford?—and the riding of Guelph–Wellington, both of which are about the same size, I think that's very important.

Mrs. Sandals: I'll look it up for you: Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford.

Mr. Wilkinson: Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford. That is the riding; absolutely. They are about the same size, about one fifth the size of my riding—but then with Mr. Hampton's riding being 100 times larger, how important that is. The record stands. It's important. So I think it's very important to the good people that if we're going to have bigger ridings, we have to take a look at that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I have a few comments on Bill 218. One of the things that bothers me about this bill—

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Speaker: I rise to correct my record. Back on April 2, 2007, I had the occasion to be here in the House answering questions from the member from Lanark–Carleton. I refer specifically to minute 7,613, where I believe at the time I was indicating that the member from Lanark–Carleton in fact assumed a position in the Legislature as a member of the executive council with responsibility for the lottery and gaming interests. I believe I indicated here in the minute that the member from Lanark–Carleton was the minister during the period of 2002-03. I rise pursuant to the standing orders in order to—

The Acting Speaker: I think you've had your opportunity.

The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Wilson: It's a dirty, dirty trick that you're trying to do over there.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: What's your point of order?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I rise pursuant to standing orders to correct the record.

The Acting Speaker: I think you went on plenty.

The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Wilson: It's just a clearly dirty trick that you guys are pulling over there, your absolutely dirty tricks, and it's one of the reasons I'm going to move adjournment of this debate, because you guys are dirty-tricks Liberals.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Simcoe-Grey has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1755 to 1825.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Wilson has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 3; the nays are 17.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being well past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, May 7, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1826.

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No. 169A



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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 7 May 2007

Lundi 7 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 mai 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Yesterday, I had the honour of attending the tribute to the fallen and the ceremony of remembrance, both held here at Queen's Park. I was joined by my caucus members Frank Klees and Norm Miller, along with the leader of the official opposition, Mr. John Tory.

At the tribute to the fallen, tribute plaques were presented to the families of each of the 12 men and women from various police services who gave their lives in the line of duty since 2002. At the Ontario Police Memorial, six new names were added to the wall of honour. Three of the names were of officers who died in the line of duty over 75 years ago: Constable John R. Davey of Cornwall, in 1892; County Constable Albert C. Sprinstead of Wentworth, in 1819; and traffic officer Miles Campbell, Department of Highways, Ottawa, in 1929.

Sadly, we also added the names of three officers who lost their lives in 2006: Constable John C. Atkinson of the Windsor Police Service; Constable Donald J.Y. Doucet of the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service; and Constable David Mounsey of the Huron OPP. The families of these three officers who lost their lives last year were all on hand to pay tribute. Shelley Atkinson, Debbie Doucet and Brenda Carey each laid a beautiful wreath on behalf of their spouses.

Each and every day of the year police officers leave their homes and families and go out into the communities across Ontario to protect the homes and families of people they often do not even know. Yesterday's tribute and ceremony of remembrance reminds us of how fortunate we are to live in a province like Ontario; we always have a sense of security.

On behalf of John Tory and our caucus, I would like to thank the police services of our province for the dedication and fine work they do. And for those officers who have lost their lives, they shall remain, as the inscription on the memorial wall says, "Heroes in life, not death."

REACHING OUR OUTDOOR FRIENDS

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Friday morning, I was pleased to attend an official groundbreaking

ceremony in my riding hosted by Reaching Our Outdoor Friends or, as it's more commonly known, ROOF.

Founded in 1989, ROOF is a well-known organization in Waterloo which works with homeless and vulnerable youth. Through a variety of programs and services, ROOF offers youth the support they need to get off the street and end the cycle of homelessness.

Tragically, on December 28, 2005, the house where ROOF bases its activities was the victim of arson, and the organization literally found itself without a home. ROOF was not to be deterred. Over the last year and a half, its leadership has worked day and night to keep ROOF's operations going and put in place plans for a brand new facility.

At the same time, the community has come together through an outpouring of concern and support to send one simple message: ROOF must continue. I was pleased to add the voice of the provincial government to that message Friday when I confirmed that the government of Ontario was contributing \$250,000 towards the establishment of the new centre.

Although there is much work left to be done, the staff, volunteers and board of this outstanding organization deserve our full support, and I would like to congratulate ROOF's executive director, Sandy Bell, board chair Tim Sothorn and fundraising chair, Jennifer Weber, as well as ROOF's board members: Heather Jefferey, Nigel Lee, Ros Hood-Morris, Michael Malleck, Henry de Jong, Bryan "Buzz" Dean, Sherri Burch-Lewis, Doug O'Toole, and Marilyn Bechthold, as well as Al Way and his team at Jamesway Construction, who are building the new facility.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Last week, the PC candidate in Northumberland, Cathy Galt, was attacked in the Legislature and in a Cobourg paper for doing the right thing—standing up for the interests of rural Ontario. Anyone paying attention knows that the McGuinty Liberal government is dominated by Toronto-area members, and that's been reflected in many ways, including threats against farmers' markets and church suppers.

Cathy's sin was to raise concerns based on the public comments of an official with the Durham Health Unit stating that meters on wells in rural Ontario are inevitable. That official's words ring true when talking about a very interventionist Liberal government and the

possibility of controlling access to regional water tables on the basis of real or imagined droughts. The McGuinty Liberals deny and deny, but this is a government with an unprecedented record of broken promises and a frequently revealed disdain for the traditions and way of life in rural, small-town Ontario. The Cobourg paper, in repeated editorial attacks on Mrs. Galt, reaffirmed its role as an extension of the Liberal re-election campaign, a role that's been apparent since her nomination. The newspaper's clear bias is an unfortunate reflection on Osprey newspapers and the chain's honourable owner, Mike Sifton.

Cathy Galt is an outstanding individual, and she is doing something we clearly need more of—fighting for rural Ontario. Keep up the good work, Cathy.

NURSING WEEK

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): This is Nursing Week, and I want to extend my appreciation to all of the women and men who take on this noble profession, which affects each and every one of us throughout our lives. We are well aware of the many contributions nurses make, but we often do not think of a minority group within the nursing profession. Men make up less than 6% of all nurses in Canada.

The proud history of men and nursing dates back to the Alexian Brothers, who, for more than 700 years, have cared for the sick, the aged the poor and the dying. Here in Ontario, we are fortunate to have the Men in Nursing Interest Group of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario.

The group's mission statement reads in part as follows: "To educate, support and strengthen the image for nurses, by speaking out for nursing and speaking out for health. We respect human dignity and are committed to diversity, inclusiveness and democracy.

"The Men in Nursing Interest Group carries out its mission by educating the public about men in nursing, breaking down stereotypes of male nurses, strengthening their image by speaking out about the proud history of male nurses, collaborating with other nursing organizations and groups, and by conducting workshops and conferences."

I ask members to join me in welcoming the founder and president of the RNAO's Men in Nursing Interest Group, Mr. James D'Astolfo. He is joined by the group's membership officer, Mr. Joseph Gajasan, and a special adviser to the group, Dr. Connie D'Astolfo. I welcome all three of them to the House.

KEN CHARLEBOIS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I would like to tell you about a truly heroic constituent of mine. Ken Charlebois began his career as a firefighter in 1976. He rose through the ranks and eventually became a fire

department captain in Ottawa. His successful 35-year career ended when he retired in 2004.

Last year, Ken was preparing to marry his beloved Ingrid Koenig, but just two weeks before their wedding they received some terrible news. Ken was diagnosed with esophageal cancer. He underwent a series of medical treatments and had his esophagus removed. Unfortunately, the cancer spread to other parts of his body and Ken was told that he did not have much longer to live.

He once again set out to save lives, but this time it would be the lives of his fellow firefighters. He met with local fire station houses and taught his colleagues about the occupational risks they face and the importance of safety equipment. He also advocated for legislation that would make it easier for firefighters to receive compensation for work-related illnesses, particularly esophageal cancer.

Last Thursday, I called Ken's family at the hospital to tell them that our government was taking the action he had asked for. I was told that when the news was shared with him, he raised his arms in the air to make the "victory" sign. Two hours later, Ken passed away. He never learned that the legislation passed through this House in a mere six minutes, but he did die knowing his efforts to bring change were successful.

Ken Charlebois will be deeply missed. I offer my sincerest condolences to his family for their loss.

1340

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to draw attention to a column in the Toronto Star about Mr. McGuinty's shameful performance in the last few weeks. Today's column in the Toronto Star by Ian Urquhart points out, "Not once was a question on the so-called slush fund directly answered by a government minister." The McGuinty government stonewalled every time it was asked to account for the more than \$30 million of public money spent recklessly.

In his column, Ian Urquhart pointed out that the Liberals either changed the subject or impugned the motives of members raising that very question. Urquhart went on to say, "It is not just the institution of the Legislature that is being held in contempt by the government; it is virtually all the daily newspapers in the province, which have editorialized in favour of calling in the Auditor General to examine the \$30 million in grants" scheme.

It isn't just the opposition MPPs who are calling for accountability. It's the Ontario media. It's deserving communities that are shut out of the funding. It's citizens across this very province. Opposition MPPs are only doing their job by asking the difficult questions. When will the McGuinty government do its job and provide some of the answers?

This government's slush fund issue is not about whom; instead, it's about how these groups were either denied or qualified for these grants, and what was the process.

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): On behalf of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mike Colle, I would like to say that I recently had the pleasure of announcing in my riding \$300,000 in support for the development of a web portal to help the city promote itself to newcomers through our municipal gateway website. The local site will be linked with ontario-immigration.ca, an international portal that provides up-to-date information on everything from towns and cities to labour markets and skills accreditation.

With this announcement, our goal is to help newcomers succeed by breaking down barriers that prevent them from contributing to Ontario's economy. After years of neglect by the previous government, we're committed to providing the necessary resources to help newcomers better integrate.

Skilled immigrants from all over the world are an underutilized resource with great potential to advance the economic growth in communities like mine in Sault Ste. Marie. With major construction projects on the horizon like our new hospital and our waterfront tourism project, high-demand careers and jobs have been identified locally. Negotiating the first-ever Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, increasing federal spending on language training and settlement services by an additional \$920 million over five years, is another way we're helping newcomers; and establishing the first provincial internship program for the internationally trained and investing over \$50 million province-wide annually on English as a second language and French as a second language for adult newcomers.

Again, I would like to thank the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for working so hard to help newcomers in this province become productive members of society. Together, we're building a better community and certainly a brighter Ontario.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I rise today to talk about the McGuinty government's commitment to protecting our species at risk and our forward-looking vision for Ontario's environment. We are significantly updating the Endangered Species Act for the first time since 1971 to better protect species at risk. We are also providing more protection for our natural environment through the greenbelt, which safeguards 1.8 million acres of green space and provides a safe habitat for 66 species at risk. In contrast, the Tories had no strategy for our endangered species and left a legacy that threatened animals and plants at risk of extinction. They actually gave away more land than they preserved.

Now, the Tories have nominated a candidate who wants to destroy the good work we've done. Hillier's landowners' group in the Ottawa area has said they will

bulldoze five acres of riverfront woodlot to protest our Endangered Species Act. Destruction of environmentally valuable land should never be used as a political bargaining chip.

We Liberals are also committed to protecting our clean water, while the Tories voted against this. And who was one of the major advocates against the legislation? The same candidate who was nominated on Saturday.

The leader of the official opposition is trying to play both sides, but he's coming up on the wrong side of progress. While the McGuinty Liberals—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

RIDING OF BRANT

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Thank you for this opportunity to make a brief but very important announcement about what's happening in the riding of Brant. I'm very pleased that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities appeared just a short time ago to make the very important announcement that Nipissing University would be receiving a \$1-million grant to help it with its downtown development of the university. On top of that, there was another \$1-million grant offered to Wilfred Laurier University to continue its heritage project.

The growth of this university partnership between Mohawk College, Wilfred Laurier University and Nipissing University has seen an original birth in 1998 of 52 students to over 1,500 students who will be attending university and college in the city of Brantford, Ontario.

Minister, I want to say to you, on behalf of the citizens of Brant, thank you for being a partner in the growth of this fantastic opportunity for the youth of our riding of Brant. The riding of Brant now has the capacity to grow, with an estimate of over 2,500 students attending university. That is a great legacy that the minister and the previous minister have started by allowing us to grow with this opportunity, once again showing that the government has its sights set in the right direction: on the future growth of universities in the province of Ontario. I want to recognize in particular the hard work that the Grand Valley Educational Society did in raising money initially and the city of Brantford for supporting these projects. I thank the minister wholeheartedly.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 164, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, the Environmental Protection Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act / Projet de loi 164, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur, la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I have a motion specifically requested by the member for Timmins–James Bay, and it reads as follows: I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, May 7, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 344. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas
Bentley, Christopher
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Caplan, David
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Hoy, Pat

Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Oraziotti, David

Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Ferreira, Paul

Kormos, Peter
Martel, Shelley
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Savoline, Joyce
Tabuns, Peter
Tascona, Joseph N.
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 31; the nays are 17.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 221, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters and certain related occupations / Projet de loi 221, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail à l'égard des pompiers et de certaines professions connexes.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): As we all know, the McGuinty government is delivering on real, positive change that will make Ontario stronger, healthier and more prosperous. One of the ways we are achieving this goal is by making the province better prepared to respond to emergencies. So today I rise in the House to mark Emergency Preparedness Week, which runs from May 6 to May 12.

Emergency Preparedness Week is a joint initiative involving the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments. During the week, we will showcase the work of Emergency Management Ontario and the province to make our communities safer. We want to be as prepared and resilient as possible in an emergency. The devastation of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana must never happen here in Ontario.

Last year, the Legislature passed the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, giving Ontario one of the most comprehensive emergency management regimes in North America. For example, the act allows the government to restrict travel or order evacuations and establish emergency shelters or hospitals and quickly purchase supplies, water or food.

This government has made significant strides in making Ontario safer and more secure by providing the province with the tools to respond to emergencies. Just this morning, the McGuinty government kicked off Emergency Preparedness Week in Ontario by unveiling the new provincial Mobile Emergency Operations Centre. This mobile command vehicle is equipped with multiple communications and emergency management systems. It will be a new mobile nerve centre of provincial field response in situations where normal communications and emergency response systems are not available. Tomorrow I will make another announcement

in Waterloo on a new web-based emergency management tool.

Our collective safety and security depends on preparedness for the province and for individuals. Getting this message out is the reason behind Emergency Preparedness Week. That's why this year's focus is on family preparedness. When disaster strikes, timing is critical and so is being prepared, especially the first 72 hours following any disaster. Yet, most Ontario households are not prepared. Ontario may not be as vulnerable to earthquakes and landslides as British Columbia, for example, but we are not immune to natural disasters. Severe weather is a year-round occurrence in Ontario. Tornadoes are not uncommon. Forest fires sometimes put northern and remote communities at risk. We also recognize the risks associated with an industrial society and the threat posed by terrorism. Ontarians have a personal stake in being better prepared when disaster strikes. Businesses need to have emergency plans for the safety of employees and the continuity of operations.

1400

Every Ontario household should have an emergency plan and well-organized emergency survival kit to get the family through the first 72 hours of a crisis when emergency response resources may be stretched thin. I make it a habit to personally inspect the survival kit in my own home at least twice a year to make certain the batteries are working and to replace any spoiled food. Emergency planning for your family should include every need of the household, including infants and people with disabilities or special needs.

To this last point, on Friday I will unveil a new resource to help Ontarians with disabilities prepare for emergencies. Tips on how to write out an emergency plan, and how to assemble and maintain a survival kit for both the home and car, are available on my ministry's website.

I encourage schools, businesses, libraries, service groups and members of the Legislature to use Emergency Preparedness Week to take stock on how prepared you and your families are to confront an emergency situation, and I ask that you take the time to promote greater awareness in your ridings of the potential for disaster and the need to be prepared.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements? Comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On behalf of John Tory and the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'm pleased to respond to some of the comments made today by Minister Kwinter.

I would like to begin by thanking all of our emergency service workers in our province for the fine job they do, whether they are with volunteer organizations or some of our professional associations like we saw yesterday—an awful lot of police services here at Queen's Park.

At this time I would like to thank and publicly congratulate the commissioner of public safety, Jay Hope, for the fine job he is doing and for the career that he has

had, first at the Ontario Provincial Police and moving up the ladder to this position he has today.

The minister talks about emergency preparedness. As we speak, we are entering day 432 of the Caledonia crisis. I know it's easy to go out and make fancy announcements. I know there is a new Mobile 1, as it's called, which has been released and purchased. But it takes leadership as well.

One of the things I wanted to put on the record today is the fact that in the Caledonia situation we really haven't seen leadership. The minister has never been there himself. The Premier has never been there. The Minister of Natural Resources has never been there. We've counted on John Tory and Toby Barrett to bring home that information to the folks here at Queen's Park because we certainly haven't seen the leadership. I want to put on the record some comments made by our leader, John Tory, last week in Owen Sound when he spoke to the Ontario Police Services Board. It says this, and I'm basically reading his press release:

"Under a PC government, no one will be beneath the law, above the law or beyond the law.

"A Progressive Conservative government would ensure there is one rule of law for everyone in Ontario, John Tory announced today in a speech to the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards convention.

"The fact is that right now, across several fronts, we do not have one law for all. And I believe that this must change," said the PC leader. "Nobody can be forgotten. Nobody gets to opt out. Nobody gets to live beyond the law's reach and protection. All of this is possible only if the rules of the game are consistent, stable, equitable and fair."

"In his speech, Tory said a PC government would ensure 'one law for all' by focusing on three principles. In the first, Tory said that no one should be beneath the law.

"We must do everything it takes to protect the disenfranchised, the poor and the vulnerable portions of our population. We must ensure they are protected under the same law as applies to everyone else and that they have equitable access to justice," said Tory. He pointed to the PC Time for Action plan to combat youth violence, which included a number of measures to help youth and families and prevent crime.

"The second principle is that no one should be above the law, whether it is regarding a political protest, a labour dispute or any other issue. 'The Premier of Ontario must be prepared to vigorously pursue new tools and new measures to ensure all parties comply with the rule of law. Simply standing by and allowing land occupations and railway blockades or other disruptive demonstrations that defy court injunctions just cannot be an option.'

"Tory said he is prepared to pursue civil remedies against anyone who leads a protest that crosses the line between free speech and disregard for public safety, and the rule of law.

“We will undertake to develop new tools and protocols for government to protect the public interest—whether it is in situations where people are concerned about environmental projects, a land claim, or any other matter,” said Tory. “There needs to be a better way to manage dissent in Ontario. It comes down to leadership.”

“Under the third principle, Tory said no one should be beyond the law, whether it’s organized crime, gangs or white-collar criminals. In the case of white-collar crime, Tory said a PC government would get serious about investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating securities fraud and other white-collar crimes.

“By insisting on one law for all, I believe we could see real progress,” said Tory. “More importantly, in doing so we would create a fairer, safer and more equitable society for all of us.”

On this Emergency Preparedness Week, I hope that you’ve enjoyed listening to the comments made by our leader, John Tory, at the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards convention last week in Owen Sound. Thank you for the opportunity to do this.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I’m pleased to be able to respond to the Minister of Community Safety on behalf of the New Democrats here at Queen’s Park. I appreciate the minister’s genuine interest in the whole broad matter of emergency preparedness.

While the minister approaches this in a most serious way, I suspect that were his counterpart the Minister of the Environment to have dealt with this issue, her message might have been simply to flick off and hope for the best.

I put to this minister and this government that the New Democrats have been here at Queen’s Park with real solutions to serious problems, with ideas whose time certainly has come.

If we’re going to talk about emergency preparedness, then I put to this government that they should be moving promptly to pass Bill 164, the legislation proposed by New Democrat Peter Tabuns from Toronto–Danforth that talks about the right to know in a community—the right to know where toxic materials are supplied, sourced, utilized or stored—so that people, including emergency response personnel, can safeguard themselves when they’re doing their already dangerous jobs.

I say to the minister that if this government is really serious about emergency preparedness, then it will move promptly to pass Bill 30, the bill sponsored by Shelley Martel, my New Democratic Party colleague from Nickel Belt, which, as we all know, is the one designed to protect health workers, health professionals who are out there. They’re the front-line people. They’re the people who do the emergency response. It’s the bill that’s designed to protect health professionals from needle-stick injuries. It, in and of itself, is an oh so modest proposal, yet one that this government, notwithstanding the minister’s apparent passion for emergency preparedness—Linda Haslam-Stroud, president of the Ontario Nurses’ Association, says, “We believe it’s really a no-brainer.”

That’s Bill 30, Ms. Martel’s bill dealing with needle-stick injuries.

If this government were serious about emergency preparedness, it would pass Michael Prue’s Bill 120, and that’s that most modest proposal that would require that fire escapes from second and third floors of buildings be constructed of metal, not of wood. Talk about, once again, a no-brainer. When you’ve got the crisis, the catastrophe, of a huge fire, a block-wide fire in a residential area where people have to escape by leaving their second-, third-, and fourth-floor apartments and you’ve got wood fire escapes that this government persists in allowing here in the province of Ontario, you haven’t demonstrated emergency preparedness, you’ve demonstrated a significant contribution to the crisis.

If this government were really serious about emergency preparedness, it would respond promptly in ensuring that N95 respirators for health workers are available to each and every health professional.

You see, all the plans in the world come to naught if you don’t have fully staffed, adequately trained, fully resourced front-line personnel out there doing the dangerous jobs. Let’s understand who these people are: They’re our firefighters, they’re our police officers, they’re our health professionals, they’re our emergency response people.

Just today I received an e-mail from constituent Craig Reid in Thorold, who, in response to Bill 221, asks: Will they—and he’s referring to himself and his colleague volunteer firefighters—be among the firefighters who are entitled to the presumption contained in the legislation that was proposed and passed by this Legislature last Thursday?

Huge parts of Ontario are serviced solely by volunteer firefighters; another big chunk by compound fire services like they have down where I come from, where professional firefighters are supported by volunteer firefighters. Those volunteer firefighters want to be assured that they’re going to be a part of Bill 221, too. We can make fancy speeches, but the proof is in the pudding out there on the ground.

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WEARING OF PINS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On behalf of the community, I would like to thank the members of the House for giving approval, unanimous consent, to the “Go, Wolves, Go” buttons. That community really does appreciate it, and they’ve asked that I pass on that message to you. To bring you up to date, the “Go, Wolves, Go” fire is certainly burning brightly in Sudbury. The series is tied one game each. They come back to Sudbury for games Tuesday and Wednesday. We’ll keep you up to date, and it’s “Go, Wolves, Go.”

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The buses won't be able to afford the gas to get there.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it concerns the slush fund that he is running out of his office.

For weeks now, Minister, we have been asking about the process by which millions of dollars in year-end slush fund payments were made. Indeed, not only are we asking, but other groups and individuals in the province are wanting to know: "What is the process? How can I access the money? Why did no one make me aware about this slush fun?"

We now learn from the *Toronto Star* on Saturday that there was yet another organization with Liberal ties that received \$250,000 out of your slush fund. We also read in the *Toronto Star* that there was an individual who was on the board of directors of that group who is employed as a senior staffer in your office. I ask you, Minister: Will you explain the process by which this organization received their grant?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The investments we've made in helping newcomers are important investments, and we are proud of making those investments. I would like to correct the member opposite and say that the staff person she mentioned was brought into my office as an intern. That was part of a program we had to reach out to foreign-trained professionals. He was trained in China and studied here in Toronto, and we're proud to bring him aboard as an intern to do research and to work in my office, because we are trying to ensure that we are investing in the programs that will give foreign-trained professionals the opportunity to work here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Before the supplementary, I remind members that the questions need to be placed through the Speaker.

Mrs. Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister: The question that I asked was about the process by which the organization received its \$250,000 grant. We have asked now, on many occasions, for the process, for the application form and for this minister to produce them. I ask again: Will you table with us a copy of the application form that was received from the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada for this money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I've said before, my ministry is constantly meeting with stakeholders, going to community events, listening to front-line providers who have ongoing needs to provide funding, whether it be for English as a second language; whether it means funding

to respect our heritage, preservation; whether it is funding to promote volunteerism, on an ongoing basis. We are in contact with organizations that are trying to increase their capacity and trying to meet unfilled needs. This is an ongoing process of consultation, of input we have from organizations across this province that do great work.

Mrs. Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Do you know what? There are many people in this province who would like access to this fund, this slush fund which they knew nothing about. Regrettably, there was no process. There wasn't an application process whatsoever. You know, the *Today Daily News* did have an interview with the CEO of CPAC, and that individual confirmed that there were no clear criteria for the application. He said that they were lucky to submit the application when they did; they were lucky to have it approved as quickly as they did. He declined to answer about whether or not he got any help from anyone. I guess I would say to you, will you produce the application? Why are you treating people in this province unfairly? And who helped this organization access this fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, this organization, through other organizations, is doing incredible work in helping newcomers, or finding foreign-trained professionals, the ability to get registered. We are constantly trying to improve their capacity. We are trying to find ways of investing in these organizations, and these organizations continue to put forward ideas, suggestions. In fact, this organization that came forward asking for support is the result of a very tragic situation that has been occurring in a number of immigrant communities where there are many deeply frustrated, highly educated, talented newcomers who haven't been getting help. This organization was very active, going back to last summer when there was a tragic situation that occurred in Toronto—an unfortunate situation. That's where we are getting—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question in the third person.

Mrs. Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and it concerns his slush fund. There are many worthy organizations in this province. They are all deserving of money. However, they do not have equal access to this funding because there was no process, there were no criteria and they didn't know about it. It appears that only certain groups with Liberal connections have been receiving the money. I would say to the minister, it is time for him to stop his stonewalling. It is time to call in the auditor, as many people across this province are demanding, and it is time for him to do the honourable thing and resign.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the needs of so many organizations, whether it be in the volunteer side and the newcomer side, are great. We can't, and no government has been able to, meet all the needs that are out there. We've tried to do that because for years there was no investment in these areas. They were abandoned. That's why we put in an attempt to meet those needs. The process is one that

we are making even better. By now, we have an online registry so that they can apply directly to this registry for capital projects. That was never there before. We're trying to make it better. There are many worthy organizations, and all organizations need more help. We agree there, and we're trying to do that even more in the days to come.

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Mrs. Witmer: My question is to the minister again. There are many worthy organizations and they all deserved an opportunity to access funding. Unfortunately, there has been no process; there have been no criteria; there has been no accountability to the taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

I say to you again, you have not been able to provide one single application form. There are many, many questions that go unanswered. When are you going to call in the auditor, clean up this mess, and when are you going to resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member opposite will again take note that in the Toronto area last summer there was a dramatic situation that occurred with a foreign-trained professional, a double Ph.D. from two universities, Purdue University and the University of Toronto. These are young men and women who come to Toronto with great hope and aspirations. There was a cry out last summer, as there had been the summer before, for investment in helping newcomers to transition into jobs. Fifty per cent of them cannot work in the field they were trained for. We tried, along with CPAC, TCCSA, CICS and other immigrant-serving community groups, to ensure that this call for help didn't go unheard.

There are people who are doing very well as newcomers, but there is the silent majority, a significant number of newcomers, that is crying out for help just to get a job. That's the investment we made here, to try and ensure that they're no longer ignored and that they don't suffer in silence with their families and friends. That's what they're doing now. We're trying to make that better.

Mrs. Witmer: This entire situation has become embarrassing for the government. Ian Urquhart writes in the Toronto Star today that this government's handling of this issue "has been the nadir of their four years in office." He goes on to say, "It is not just the institution of the Legislature that is being held in contempt by the government; it is virtually all the daily newspapers in the province, which have editorialized in favour of calling in the Auditor General."

Everyone knows there is a need for accountability—accountability to taxpayers and fair treatment of all the groups in Ontario who are looking for funds. This minister has had the opportunity to provide an application and to explain the process now more than 200 times. He has refused to produce anything of substance. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, when is this minister finally going to call in the auditor, as people demand, and when is he going to resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Over the last number of years we have partnered with exceptional organizations, big and

small. Whether they be organizations serving newcomers or whether they be organizations like Frontier College, all these organizations we've partnered with. They've provided excellent service over the years with very little help from government. We've made those investments in those organizations because their many needs are unmet. We are now making that process even better because it was not an area that was given any attention. We have an online directory now where these capital needs can be tracked and that we can have more investments, because there are a number of other organizations that are worthy, and we hope to continue to partner with them because there's much more to do.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. Hard-working Ontarians need to know that the money Ontario invests to help newcomers is allocated fairly. That is the job of a cabinet minister; in this case, the job of the Minister of Citizenship. My question is this: Could the minister table all documentation and criteria he considered when granting government funds to the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Chinese Professionals Association of Canada has a long track record of helping newcomers, especially those who are professionally—many of them are engineers. They have mentorship programs. They have ongoing bursaries. They team up with everybody from the Toronto-Dominion Bank to the Royal Bank of Canada. They are an excellent organization with excellent volunteers. They are dedicated to increasing services to foreign-trained professionals, especially those who are moving in greater numbers into Scarborough and York regions. That's the partnership we have with the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada.

Mr. Hampton: It is a simple question. I think the average person across Ontario would expect that before the McGuinty government puts a quarter of a million dollars out the door, there be some documentation, some criteria. This issue raises a question because Michael Huang, who is a policy adviser to the Minister of Citizenship until this weekend, was also listed on the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada website as a member of their executive committee.

Now, in December 2006, the McGuinty government gave the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada a cheque for \$25,000 and then in March a further cheque for \$250,000. The connection between this group and the McGuinty government is a cause for serious concern, especially when other credible organizations were not told by the McGuinty government that money was available or were told they weren't going to get money when they made a request. Again, can the minister table the documents and the criteria used when allocating \$275,000 to this group?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said earlier, Michael Huang is a man who has been studying in Canada—underemployed. He's been doing all kinds of volunteer work with student

groups and unemployed professionals. He came into my office as an intern back in September. He resigned from the Chinese Professionals Association in October and he continued to work as an intern. He is an intern that I brought into my office just as an expansion of what we've done with the Ontario public service to show that we were also interested in my staff internally to promote the internship for foreign-trained professionals. So Michael Huang came into my office as an intern and he was employed there as an intern up until last—

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The question was about what documentation, what criteria, the McGuinty government used before you issued cheques totalling \$275,000 of the public's money. In December 2006, the Minister of Citizenship sent a cheque for \$25,000. To quote the press release, the money was to be used "to gather information that will help ease newcomers' transition into life." That was over six months ago. Can the minister table for this Legislature the information that was supposed to be gathered using this \$25,000 grant?

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Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the figure was \$21,000. But the grant that was given at that time was as a result of a crisis that was occurring, where there was a cry in the immigrant community, especially in the Chinese community, because essentially people were saying that government must do something immediately to deal with the fact that there were many foreign-trained professionals in that community who were willing to work and couldn't find work; 70% of them were highly educated. They said to our government and to all governments at that time—and there were many newspaper articles, many press and media reports—that something had to be done, that we could no longer ignore the despair of these foreign-trained professionals. This organization was willing to do something to try and find the solutions to deal with these—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Hampton: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. Again I ask the question, where are the criteria and where is the documentation? Because new Canadians deserve respect and fairness, and they deserve an open and transparent system of funding programs. Instead, the McGuinty government is offering slush money and partisan bullying.

I'm sending across this photo from Ming Pao newspaper, a recent photo. As you know, Ming Pao is a respected newspaper in the Chinese Canadian community. The news story focuses on the grants to the Chinese Professionals Association and the questions around them. I'm asking the minister, can you identify the individuals in the photo that accompanies this news story in Ming Pao?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member opposite fails to appreciate the fact that in Toronto, in southern Ontario, there is a crisis, and the crisis was made very apparent last summer. The government had to do something, and we tried to do something because there are too many

very, very fragile situations in our newcomer community that can no longer be ignored. The staff person I brought in as an intern had been working as a volunteer to raise money for orphaned children sometimes, sometimes for a mother—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: This staff member who came on as an intern had been working to help people in desperate situations; in fact, the whole community was raising money for people in these desperate situations. That's what he was doing. He was involved in the community in a wide breadth of activities, but he was also very dedicated to helping newcomers solve this problem of trying to get—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The question was about the identity of the individuals in this photo. This photo was taken at an event called Chinese Canadians for Liberals. In the centre is a familiar face, the McGuinty government Minister of Revenue. On the far right of this Chinese Canadians for Liberals photo is Michael Huang, until this weekend a director of the Chinese Professionals Association and a staffer in the minister's office. On the left is Thomas Qu, another director of the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada and here identified as someone in Chinese Canadians for Liberals.

Why is the minister unwilling to provide the documentation for the \$275,000 in grants to this organization when this photo for the Ming Pao newspaper suggests it's about Chinese Canadians for Liberals?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, I mention to him that Michael Huang came to my office as an intern in September. He resigned from the Chinese Professionals Association at the end of October, so he was no longer on the board of the Chinese Professionals Association as of October, and not as stated.

Whether it's participating with Liberal organizations or Liberal events, newcomers are allowed to participate with any political party they choose, and they do so. Whether Michael Huang participated in this event here, that's his right to do so. As a citizen, he's allowed to do that. He also participated with volunteer organizations and he also became an intern in my office. I think he has done very good work as an intern and does very good work in the community at large.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, here is the issue. Hard-working people in hundreds of community organizations, organizations with a long history and great credibility, were not even told by the McGuinty government that government funding was available for them. But groups and organizations with close ties to the Liberal Party or to the minister's office received multiple grants. Until this weekend, a staffer in the minister's office was listed as an executive board member of this organization. Other members of this organization publicly campaigned for the Liberal Party. People inside and outside the Chinese community are raising serious questions and they deserve answers. My question is, when will the minister do the

right thing and ask the Auditor General to conduct an immediate investigation and report on the McGuinty government slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Many of the organizations across Ontario that help immigrants or do volunteer work participate in all three political parties in an active way, and they're allowed to do that. We're also looking at organizations that are focused on making a change and delivering services to, in this case, foreign-trained professionals who have not gotten ahead in this country despite all their great qualifications. So this organization here has been dedicated, essentially through volunteer works and mentorships, since 1993, to doing this. They wanted to partner with us to provide these services in these gaps that existed. The gaps are very apparent. They're trying to do this in a way that will improve those services, especially in York region and Scarborough, and I think they're more than capable of doing that.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again through you to the Minister of Citizenship about his Liberal friends' slush fund.

We're talking about the policy adviser in your office, a Mr. Huang, and the contradictions with respect to a whether he's a member of the board or not a member of the board and when he resigned the board. I guess I'd like to cut to the chase. We know that in terms of many, if not most, of the monies that flowed out of your office, there was no application, no approval process, no follow-up audit. In the case of this particular organization that Mr. Huang was a director of, the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada, how did you reach the conclusion that this organization needed a quarter of a million dollars? Did Mr. Huang communicate with you in respect to that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said earlier, Michael Huang was an intern who came in September. He worked as an intern for six months. At that point in March, I brought him on because of the excellent work that he did over those six months and the excellent expertise he brought to the office. I brought him on in my staff as a policy adviser because of the excellent work that he did after the opportunity. As an intern, we had no discussions about funding of any projects. He was essentially there in a new capacity and he did not participate in any funding decisions on any of these projects.

Mr. Runciman: I don't think that was an answer to my question. You know, we like to pose questions through you, Mr. Speaker, as required. It would be nice to get some answers back through you as well. Can you do something about that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, through you again: We had this individual apparently resign from this organization following the announcement and the publication of the facts that this slush fund has been underway for some period of time, perhaps now two years.

The minister didn't answer my specific question with respect to whether there was any discussion with Mr.

Huang around the funding needs of this organization as he saw them. He's indicated that he wasn't involved in the approval process. We didn't ask him that. We're not suggesting that. How did he reach this conclusion? As well, Mr. Speaker, would the minister tell us, through you, why he resigned following the publication of this information?

1440

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I've said to the member, Michael Huang started in September and resigned from the board the next month, at the end of October. This organization has been working for 17 years, whatever it is, in helping newcomers. It has an exceptional track record of trying to get employment and recognition. It's a great advocate for newcomers in an area where, for years, there was no help. They were great advocates in supporting the passage of Bill 124. They were great advocates in getting more funding for occupation-specific English language programs and also linking the business community with foreign-trained professionals. That's what the investment's going to do, because that's the key for many foreign-trained professionals to getting mentorships and linkage with business. That's what the Chinese Professionals Association is very good at and is committed to helping with.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question, through you, to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: This weekend, the Toronto Star revealed that another association with Liberal Party ties and with direct links to your office received a grant from the ministerial slush fund. There are a number of groups that have been on the ground for years, providing assistance to newcomers from China. A question for the minister is, how did he let other groups who have been serving the Chinese Canadian community for years know about this year-end slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I categorically refuse to categorize these investments in that negative light because organizations, whether they're serving the Chinese community or other communities, have received partnership with us, whether it's CICS, which has been around for many, many years, TCCSA has been around for many years—all of these organizations that received increased funding from us on the capital side and on new program expansion, plus the federal funding.

In certain cases, we have to expand our capacity. Here's an area in York region and in northern Scarborough where there are thousands of foreign-trained individuals who are trying to make a living. Their service needs are not being met. This organization is partnering with us to fill this gap, which everybody identifies. If you talk to all of the service providers in York region and northern Scarborough, there's untold demand up there and we're trying to meet that—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Tabuns: Yet another non-answer from the minister. Nonetheless, will the minister table the documentation showing that other groups that have been

serving the Chinese-Canadian community in Ontario for years on issues like employment were notified about the slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are ongoing investments that we're making in organizations like CICS. We're also currently involved with helping them build a new centre for youth in northern Scarborough. That's one of our partnerships. We have a new language program with the TCCSA. We have many new expansion programs and ongoing funding of settlement programs. In fact, the settlement programs for all organizations, whether they serve the Chinese community or others, are seeing grants being increased through the federal program that we signed—up to 50% increases in funding, more staffing and program expansion that everybody is benefiting from. We are helping organizations in many different ways and we'd like to do more. This is part of our increased investment that we're making in this important community in Toronto.

The Speaker: New question.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This past weekend, Randy Hillier, the former president of the Ontario Landowners Association, was nominated as the provincial Conservative candidate in the riding of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox-Addington for the upcoming 2007 provincial election. We all know what radical, right-wing, divisive style of leadership this brings to the PC party of Ontario. Hillier has become well known for his stand against supply management, safe meat inspections and clean water in rural Ontario. To quote—

The Speaker: Order. The question needs to relate to the minister's responsibilities. Member for Huron-Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a member who represents a rural riding and many supply-managed producers, my constituents deserve to know what threat Hillier's nomination to the Conservative Party of Ontario poses to rural Ontario.

The Speaker: I don't think that question actually related to the minister's responsibilities.

A new question, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it deals with his slush fund. For weeks now, we've been asking about the process. We've been asking about the way that money was paid out to various groups. We've been asking because some of these groups seem to have gotten money and have close ties to the Liberal Party. And now, one has close ties to a former staffer in the minister's office.

The minister's only response to all this is, "Trust me. Trust me. Everything's above board." But we simply can't do that, not when stories keep changing, not when he tells us that he's the one who chose the group of 31 that would receive grants out of hundreds who came asking him for money, and he can't produce a single criterion to justify those decisions on how he based who would get those grants.

The time has come for the minister to stop stonewalling around this slush fund. The time has come for him to come to stand in his place and turn this over to the Auditor General and then resign. Will the minister do so?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, I think I told the same member that if you go throughout newcomer communities all across Ontario, there's a desperate cry for help. It's not in any way a political cry; it's a desperate cry for help. These are people who, most of them—in the Chinese community, for instance, 70% have graduate degrees or better, 70% are very talented and come here to get a job. They're not getting jobs.

We are trying to listen to that plea for help. It's been ignored. It's greatly needed to invest in these programs and to expand them, because we are suffering from a real tragic loss of talent and stress in families. The average income for a new immigrant from China is \$15,000. That's the—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Yakabuski: The minister is doing himself no favours, and he's not doing immigrants in this country any favours either: \$250,000 to the Bengali Cultural Society—they have a director who's a member of the Liberal Party, and they got the money after a meeting was arranged by Maria Minna, a member of cabinet in the former Chrétien-tainted government; \$200,000 to a group with seven Liberals among its seven directors only three weeks after it was registered as an animal welfare charity—the directors include a riding president, a candidate and a friend of the finance minister who is also the Liberal Party campaign chair; and now, another \$250,000 to a group with a close connection to a senior staffer in the minister's office.

Nothing short of an auditor's investigation and this minister's resignation will do. Will the minister please call in the auditor and tender his resignation?

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Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member refuses to correct the record. Michael Huang came into my office as an intern for six months. He resigned from the board he volunteered with a month after coming into my office. He has represented a lot of very talented people who need a chance in this country. That's all they ask for: a chance to work.

The member talks about helping immigrants. It's pretty difficult to see where—there are 47% of these immigrants living below the low-income cut-off, and the majority are very highly educated. That's how we're trying to help immigrants with these programs. We shouldn't tolerate the fact that half of them who come here with degrees are living below the low-income cut-off of \$15,000.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, \$91 million was budgeted for the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration in 2006, but \$118 million was spent by year end. The ministry's third quarter fiscal report projected only

\$94 million being spent, but \$25 million more was funnelled through the ministry in the last few days of the fiscal year.

My question to the Minister of Finance is, when will he ask the Auditor General to implement an immediate investigation into the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Let me tell my friend from Beaches–East York that as Minister of Finance of this province, I am extremely proud of the work that we're doing with immigrant communities all over the province. Whether they be of Chinese ethnic origin, Polish ethnic origin, Japanese or Korean, this is the makeup of Ontario. The fact that this government made a decision to create a new ministry and say we want to pay special attention to assist those communities to plant their roots deeper in this soil as quickly as possible is a matter of pride for me and every single member of this caucus.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, I would think it should be a matter of embarrassment for most of you, the way this was handled, and not pride.

The finance ministry's numbers prove that the Ministry of Citizenship has created a slush fund to reward Liberal-friendly groups for the past two fiscal years. Last year, \$118 million was spent by that ministry. This year, the minister has budgeted only \$86 million. It is simply not believable to me or anyone else who's watching this that this government is making a 30% cut to this ministry in this, an election year.

My question to the minister again: This minister needs to come clean and the Auditor General must be requested to investigate the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund. Your colleague refuses to do so. Will the minister do it himself?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Let's remind each other in this House and the people of the province that every single expenditure of the government of Ontario is examined by the Auditor General—every single expenditure.

I just want to tell my friend—I'm sorry I don't have the numbers here for last year; I wasn't the minister last year—that we are very prudent in allocating our expenditures. There is no ministry that doesn't have a need for more resources. The fact that we can set aside resources to assist some cultural communities in this province to further their work somewhat—we can't respond to all of them, you know that; there are hundreds and hundreds—the fact that we can do that work is a matter of pride for me and for my government.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The minister has seen first-hand when he has toured my riding of

Brant that we have a small, urban-rural area contained within the riding.

The official opposition likes to proclaim that they're the only voice for rural Ontario, yet conveniently they ignore the McGuinty government's countless investments in these areas or they like to take credit for them.

My constituents know better. They are celebrating the new MRI machine in the community hospital as well as the family health team in Brant and the community health centre to improve access to primary care. Unlike some members, I'm happy to give credit to the government when good things happen in rural Ontario.

I do ask the minister this, though: How else are you addressing the health concerns of rural Ontarians, who deserve just as high a quality of health care as anyone else closer to home? Could you please explain how that's done?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the question. We believe in the idea that the best health care you can find is the health care you find as close to home as possible. We've closed no hospitals but we have rebuilt many. We've given the largest budgetary increase to our smallest hospitals. We've made big investments, historic-scale investments, in community care and in primary care at the community level, including 44 family health teams deployed in rural Ontario all across this vast province.

As an example of another rural-based family health team, the one in Brockville, through mobile delivery of health care in the form of a motor home, we see that 6,000 previously orphaned patients— orphaned by people like the honourable member from Halton—have received care.

So while one party likes to pretend that it's the voice for rural Ontario, by electing a candidate for Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington they've nominated a candidate who has shot a deer and named it after a cabinet minister, a member who would make Mike Harris blush and, for some strange reason, a member who believes that the people in rural Ontario aren't entitled to the same health care and protections for their health.

Mr. Levac: Listening carefully to the answer, it's obvious that the doctor shortage is of critical concern to my constituents, and we need more creative ideas. I'm absolutely sure these guys will be there to cut the ribbons when we open their family health teams.

An issue that I know is of particular interest for some of my constituents in the riding is the role that public health plays in balancing its role within rural Ontario. I know that in Leeds–Grenville this was of particular interest when the farmers' markets were raised last year, in fairness to them. Rural Ontarians appreciated your swift response to the concerns raised by exempting farmers' markets from certain regulations while still exercising caution with respect to public safety.

Will the minister tell this House now how the ministry will continue to protect public health while balancing the unique needs of rural Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I was a member of the Ontario Legislature on a May long weekend when we all witnessed horrific circumstances occurring in rural Ontario, in Walkerton. I was in this Legislature when I saw parties of all stripes commit to implementation of all the recommendations of the O'Connor report. One of those that is before the Legislature right now, Bill 171, would see the transfer of the inspection of small drinking water systems from the Ministry of the Environment to public health units, an initiative that's supported by the Rural Ontario Municipal Association in conjunction with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. But now we see, as a voice for rural Ontario—in fact, the person who will be developing the platform for rural Ontario for John Tory, for the Leader of the Opposition's Conservative Party, is against water inspections, is against meat inspections, is against supply management. We're very interested to see how this party intends to rationalize itself against the views of its rural Ontario critic.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It concerns the slush fund that he's running. Minister, today we're hearing about an organization that managed to get \$250,000 from your year-end slush fund. I have here a letter from Mrs. Marie Smith, president of the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, the oldest grassroots organization in Ontario. They represent over 1,000 clubs and 300,000 seniors in our province. They didn't know about your slush fund and they could have used some help. The process was not fair and was not transparent. The minister picked who got the money, on what basis we really don't know. The auditor must be called in and the minister must resign. Will the minister call in the Auditor General and will he resign? I'd like a yes or no on that, please.

1500

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I just want to say again that there are many needs in this province, whether they be in volunteer groups, seniors' groups or newcomer groups. My ministry has tried to do its part, with a lot of other ministries. We've tried to invest in programs and in capacity improvement for their buildings. We've done that across Ontario. There's much more to do. That's why we're making the process even better. My ministry can at least do more of its part with a direct online application.

There are many, many more deserving groups. I agree with the member: We have to do more. We are trying to do more.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm sure President Marie Smith and the United Senior Citizens of Ontario will be pleased to print your answer in their newsletter and distribute it to the 300,000 members.

Minister, this Saturday, May 5, the editorial in the *Orillia Packet and Times* read, "At the very least, this brewing scandal should spell the end of Colle's time as citizenship and immigration minister. His response to the controversy has been unsatisfactory.

"Ontario taxpayers deserve better."

Minister, will you do what is right and resign your position?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again I want to say that I have a role as minister to try to help volunteer groups. As part of that, I invest in seniors' organizations all over the province, along with other ministers. As I said, there are many organizations that need more help. We are trying to do our best.

One of my mandates is to ensure that our newcomers who are also seniors get some help. In these investments we've made, you'll see we've made investments in seniors' organizations that also reach out to many newcomers. As much as we emphasize foreign-trained individuals, there are many newcomers who are now grandparents who need support and need these services too, so we're trying to do that also.

You can't solve everybody's problems, but we're trying to meet the needs. That's why we're making the process even better, to provide even more services for seniors, whether they've been here for many generations or recently arrived.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding consists of many new immigrants from all over the world. They speak Somali, Arabic, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Albanian, Spanish—virtually every language that's spoken in the world. Many of these immigrants are in desperate need of ESL programs. However, this government's ESL funding is woefully inadequate. Instead of addressing real needs, this government has chosen to dish out millions of slush-fund dollars through quickie, one-time grants without an application process.

Why did the minister dish out unsolicited money to groups with obvious Liberal Party ties when there is an urgent need for greater funding for ESL programs?

Hon. Mr. Colle: First of all, I want to say that one of the major investments we made was in the Centre for Spanish-Speaking Peoples and St. Clair West Services for Seniors in his riding. There are many needs in his riding.

But let me talk about ESL. Before I became minister, the ESL program for immigrants had no curriculum; \$50 million was being invested with no curriculum, no follow-up, no occupation-specific tracking. We now have a—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke needs to come to order, please. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: For 20 years, ESL was not given the attention it needed. ESL now has a curriculum, it has new

benchmarks and a new emphasis on occupation-specific English because many of the foreign-trained and newcomers need higher levels of English.

We have invested in ESL. We have paid attention to it. I visited the ESL centres. Now they have the resources, the curriculum and the programs they never had before.

Mr. Ferreira: The minister sugar-coats things again. The reality is that if new immigrants can't speak English, they have great difficulty finding employment and securing a better life for themselves and their families. As we have sadly witnessed over the past two weeks in this House, this government is more interested in a smear campaign than it is in answering tough questions on its sorry record when it comes to really helping new immigrants.

An Osprey Media column describes the McGuinty government's deplorable tactics this way: "The most reprehensible and appalling brand of self-serving politics—it is divisive, undermines the confidence of immigrants in Ontario's political system and obscures the real needs of immigrants."

Speaker, through you: When will the minister stop smearing and start investing in real ESL programs?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In the House and outside the House, I said that we're all working together; all parties are trying to do their best to help immigrants. I've said that categorically over and over again. On ESL again, this is an area that for 20 years was basically ignored. Now we're paying attention to ESL. The dollars that are being spent are now being spent with a curriculum, with benchmarks, enhanced program development. It has never been there before. We did that because too many immigrants weren't getting the ESL they required. We now provide stronger, richer ESL programs that were never done before for adult newcomers that my ministry is proud to fund. We fund over \$50 million a year for newcomers who need ESL that is occupation-specific, job-specific, work-specific. We're now doing that. It was never there before. It's a great new investment in ESL that we've never had in this province, and we're proud of it.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): Even though I represent an urban riding, I'm proud to be part of a government that speaks for rural communities, a government that is working to provide the right tools to build vibrant, thriving rural communities while at the same time protecting and promoting healthy urban communities. This government has had many accomplishments that testify to that approach. Enshrining a greenbelt as big as Prince Edward Island and the Clean Water Act are but two examples of where we're doing good things for urban residents and also for rural residents. The Clean Water Act in particular is a major accomplishment. But some people actually don't support the Clean Water Act, even though this legislation meets the requirements of the Walkerton report.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment, I wonder if we could have an update on the Clean Water Act and maybe could be reminded—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I too am an urban member, but I have had the privilege to travel across this great province, reconnect with my rural roots and have a chance to speak to our farmers and our rural community right across Ontario about the importance of providing clean, safe drinking water.

One of the things I'm proudest about is that the Clean Water Act includes the Ontario drinking water stewardship program, which will provide rural Ontarians with financial support for concrete actions to protect drinking water in their community. We have funded that program to the tune of \$28 million, and that's in addition to the \$120 million that we've put out, available in communities right across the province, for the science of drinking water. This investment in rural Ontario and in the Clean Water Act stands in contrast to John Tory and the Conservative Party and the opposition, who all voted against the Clean Water Act, who all voted against Justice—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Matthews: Minister, I know you've travelled across the province to meet with rural representatives. When you made sure that financial assistance was enshrined in the Clean Water Act, it was clear that you were listening and that you had the best interests of rural Ontarians at heart.

Some people, though, have been spreading some very serious mistruths and misinformation about the Clean Water Act—so many, in fact, I don't even know where to begin—instead of listening to experts like Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence Canada, who stated, "Clean water is precious for the health of all Ontarians. This act is an important step forward in ensuring that the protection of Ontario's source waters is a priority in every watershed."

Some people, though, focus their energy not on representing the concerns of rural Ontarians but by spreading mistruths. So rural Ontarians can be reassured yet again, how does the Clean Water Act make sure that the best interests of rural Ontarians are considered?

1510

Hon. Ms. Broten: I have to say that the record of the Conservative Party is dismal when it comes to protecting water in this province. Justice O'Connor himself recognized this when he said budget reductions are connected directly to the events of May 2000.

Unfortunately, John Tory and the Conservative Party have learned no lessons from the tragic history of our province in Walkerton. They voted against the Clean Water Act and budget measures to put more dollars into protecting water. They voted against all of the initiatives that we have sought to move forward. Now, should it surprise us that they've nominated a candidate by the

name of Randy Hillier, who is opposed to all water protection regulation? Certainly not. It doesn't surprise me.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and relates to his Liberal friends' slush fund. The minister said earlier today that his staffer Mr. Huang was employed as an intern. Will the minister please provide the details of the internship program under which Mr. Huang was employed and what was its name?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'll be happy to answer that. What we established for the first time in this province last year is an Ontario public service internship program, funded out of my ministry, where 72 foreign-trained individuals would be able to get internships paid for six months right across all government ministries, and we're very proud of that. Then what I did in my office to support that initiative was, I also provided for an internship within my office on the same basis of six months so that a foreign-trained professional could get an opportunity that may lead to another job. That's the basis of the internship program that I had in my office, but there's the wider OPS one.

Mr. Runciman: That's his own little internship program, I guess, Mr. Speaker. We'll call it an intern program for the moment because it's convenient.

On October 16, 2006, the Sing Tao paper published a photograph of Mr. Huang following his re-election to the board of directors of CPAC.

On Saturday, May 5 of this year, it was reported in the Toronto Star that Mr. Huang had resigned from the board, but he couldn't remember when. That's what he told the Star, but he told Sing Tao that he quit in November.

On Friday, May 4, the minister's spokesperson told Sing Tao that Mr. Huang resigned on October 26, but he also told another Chinese-language paper, Ming Pao, that Mr. Huang quit last September. Will the minister please resolve the discrepancies in these stories?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, we're very proud of the fact that we have now provided internship opportunities, and we hope to expand that. In this case, as I said earlier, Michael Huang came to my office on September 5. He resigned from the volunteer board he was a member of on October 26 and he served as an intern up until March of this year.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): It's my pleasure to read a petition to the Legislative

Assembly of Ontario, beside my good friend from Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels; and

"Whereas provincial and federal governments have done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas provincial tax on gas is 14 cents per litre and federal tax is 10 cents per litre, plus 6% GST; and

"Whereas these taxes have a detrimental impact on the economy and are unfair to commuters who rely on vehicles to travel to work; and

"Whereas the province has the power to set the price of gas and has taken responsibility for energy prices in other areas, such as hydro and natural gas; and

"Whereas we call on the province to remove the 14.7-cents-per-litre gas tax and on the federal government to eliminate the 10-cent gas tax, plus 6% GST, which amounts to 30% or more;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action and to also persuade the federal government to remove its gas taxes."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

COURT SUPPORT STAFF

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas 1,400 members of the Attorney General's court support staff who are working under the flexible, part-time (FPT) model, otherwise referred to as appendix 32 under a collective agreement between Management Board of Cabinet, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union negotiated in the spring of 2005, are working hundreds of hours per week in the service of the Attorney General for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas under the FPT agreement many court support staff are working as many as 20 hours or more per week for which payment is being withheld and will not be paid until months later, and when the makeup pay does eventually get paid, up to 50% may be lost to taxes because of the taxation year into which the payment may fall; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff who are being forced to work under these conditions are single mothers with fixed living expenses who incur employment-related expenses such as child care and travel costs for those hours that they are required to work but for which they are not getting paid; and in many cases these expenses are impossible to pay without the offsetting income which is being withheld by the Attorney General under the FPT agreement; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff have been left no other choice but to resign from these impossible working conditions and, in many cases, are being forced onto the welfare rolls by the very

government for which they are providing hundreds of hours of work for which they are not being paid in a timely manner; and

"Whereas the FPT agreement which is causing such hardship for employees of the Attorney General was negotiated by and entered into between the Ministry of the Attorney General, Management Board of Cabinet and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union; and the employees to whom this agreement applies insist that the terms of the agreement and their practical implications were not fully disclosed to them at the time the agreement was proposed for ratification; and

"Whereas the employees affected by this agreement have repeatedly appealed to OPSEU, the Attorney General and the Premier to point out the unfairness of being forced to work hundreds of hours without being paid for that work and the hardship this practice is causing in the lives of many employees, but these repeated appeals to the Attorney General and to the Premier that they step in to ensure fair treatment of Attorney General employees are being ignored;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the Premier, the Attorney General and the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet to take whatever steps are necessary to change the offensive provisions of the FPT agreement as set out in appendix 32 and ensure that the Attorney General's court support staff receive fair treatment as employees of the government and that among other unfair provisions of the agreement, the practice of withholding pay for hours worked cease immediately."

It is signed by Marlene Hollingsworth and others. I have affixed my signature as well.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition that I'm going to present on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls. I thank the members of Fair Share Niagara for sending it. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration," which is wet, "and there are other forms of macular degeneration," such as dry, "that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most" people "and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition and to support it and to send it down by page Zachary.

SEXUALLY EXPLICIT GOODS AND SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition, which reads as follows.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario citizens are concerned over the ease with which underaged youth can access sexually explicit goods and services; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John O'Toole has introduced legislation through a private member's bill to protect the access by youth and children to sexually explicit materials; and

"Whereas Bill 100, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2006, prohibits a person from knowingly selling, offering to sell, distributing, offering to distribute or displaying sexually explicit goods or service to a minor in any premise or place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the expeditious passage of Bill 100 and to support legislation that would protect minors from access to sexually explicit goods and services."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of the many children. I present it to page Marissa, who is from my riding of Durham.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I present this petition on behalf of the constituents of Kingston and the Islands.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's transformation agenda targets health improvement, illness prevention and improved quality of life for all Ontarians, and current literature and research indicates that sound nutrition directly impacts healthy outcomes;

"Whereas current literature and research indicates that the acuity and nutritional needs of residents of long-term-care homes is rising and there's an increasing frail resident population in long-term-care homes, with 25% to 60% at moderate to high nutritional risk, and that healthier long-term-care residents would decrease unnecessary hospitalizations, clogging of emergency wards and the use of acute care beds in hospital environments;

"Whereas the raw food cost funding, which was \$4.26 per resident per day in 1993 and is now \$5.46 per day per resident has not kept pace with inflation and has presented a barrier to providing nutritionally balanced meals and providing for the increasing specialized dietary needs, and following an extensive study, an immediate increase in raw food cost funding from \$5.46 per day per resident to \$7 per resident per day has been recommended by the Dietitians of Canada (raw food cost in Ontario long-term-care homes funding review and priority recommendations dated November 2006) to provide for the nutritional needs of this population, and

these recommendations are viewed as a best practice and are recognized by professional stakeholders;

"Whereas, although the McGuinty government has made significant investments in many areas of long-term care, most of these investments are not visible to family members, and there is a growing concern among family members that inadequate raw food cost funding is a barrier to planning quality menus and providing nutritionally balanced meals and beverages, and family members must speak for long-term-care residents who are unable to speak for themselves;

"Whereas the increasing multicultural nature of our aging society requires the introduction of more diverse food choices and ethnic, cultural and religious requirements which lead to the increased food costs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt the Dietitians of Canada, Ontario region, report and recommendations (raw food cost in Ontario long-term-care homes funding review and priority recommendations dated November 2006) and immediately increase the raw food costs in long-term care from \$5.46 per day per resident to \$7 per day per resident in order to meet the nutritional needs of this population."

1520

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I affix my signature to this petition and send it down with Christian, appropriately enough.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of neighbours in Oakville. I especially want to thank Lawrence Quinn and Stephanie Lupo for having gathered the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I'm pleased to support this petition, to affix my signature to it and to ask page Caitlyn to carry it for me.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has directed Lakeridge Health to cut mental health and addiction services and children's mental health services in order to balance its budget; and

"Whereas the ministry has directed these cuts, bypassing the Central East Local Health Integration Network, whose director has stated 'there will be no reduction in mental health and addiction services within the Central East LHIN'; and

"Whereas these cuts will likely transfer costs rather than save them, putting additional pressure on Lakeridge's emergency department, the police department, Whitby Mental Health and social service providers; and

"Whereas the Central East already receives amongst the lowest per capita hospital funding in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to revisit this decision and ensure Durham residents receive appropriate support for adults and children who need treatment for mental health and addictions."

I affix my name in support.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professionals and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such

structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

MULTIPLE LEGAL PARENTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the appeal court of Ontario on January 2, 2007, ruled that 'a child may have more than two legal parents';

"Whereas that sets up a precedent and leaves many unanswered questions which could result in possible multiple legal parents and unknown devastating ramifications to children and families of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to appeal the Ontario Court decision, so that various levels of government may thoroughly study the personal ... and legal implications of allowing more than two legal parents."

I've affixed my name to this.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have another petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows—"

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe there has been a ruling on the type of petition that was presented. I understand that the Speaker was concerned about the content of some of it being

demeaning to members, and I believe that this one might fall within that purview. I would ask for a ruling on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I'm reminded that the Speaker, in his ruling, ruled the aforementioned petition out of order because it attacked the integrity of a member of the House. This petition comes, I think, dangerously close to that. However, I do know that petitions similar to this were read to the House earlier without let or hindrance. I will allow the member to continue with this, but I would ask him not to bring further petitions of this type into the House.

Mr. Murdoch: All right.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

1530

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states: "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days...." On March 19, 2007, the member for Whitby-Ajax placed on the order paper a written question asking the Attorney General to "please provide the number of full-time, part-time and contract employees employed by the ministry, broken down for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006."

By our count, this is the 28th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than enough time to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to stop stonewalling and table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I would remind the Attorney General that he is required under standing 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask him to give the House some indication as to when the response would be forthcoming.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On that point of order, Mr. Speaker: The notification has been received and will be accepted, and I will ensure that the answer from the minister responsible will be coming forthwith. But I do reject "stonewalling" as a characterization of the answer.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Under the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: Under standing order 97(d), as you know, members of this Legislature have the right to ask ministers questions in writing and expect an answer within 24 sitting days. I speak on behalf of the member for York North, Ms. Munro, who placed a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services to "please provide a list of all ministerial letter appointments made since October

2, 2003, with information about when the term of the appointment began and ended....”

By my count, it's now 28 sitting days since that order question was placed, and no answer has been given, interim or otherwise. So I would ask you to ask the minister to please come forward with the answer to the question placed by the member for York North.

The Acting Speaker: I am advised that the members' statement is well taken, that the answer requested is overdue. I would like to remind the Minister of Community and Social Services that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask her to give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

The chief government whip.

Mr. Levac: The same undertaking will be made to give these answers as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d), and it states, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.” On March 19, 2007, the member for York North placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to “please provide a list, including cost, of every funding announcement the ministry has made since October 2, 2003, broken down by the date of the announcement and the impact on specific ridings.”

By my count, this is the 28th sitting day since this question was placed in the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister had more than enough time to answer the question, and I ask that you direct the minister to stop stonewalling and table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: First of all, before I do, I think the word “stonewalling” is not necessary to make your point. You have made it, and I am advised that the minister is in fact late. I wish to remind the Minister of Community and Social Services that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to the written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip.

Mr. Levac: I will make the same commitment as I did before, that we will work with the ministry as quickly as possible, and thank you for rejecting “stonewalling.”

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to draw your attention again to standing order 97(d). It states, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.” On December 21, 2006, the member for Durham placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to “please provide a list, including cost, of every funding announcement the ministry has made since October 2, 2003, broken down

by the date of the announcement and the impact on specific ridings.”

By our count, this is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has yet been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than four months to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to immediately table the answer.

The Acting Speaker: Just for clarification, I didn't hear the title of the minister.

Ms. MacLeod: The Minister of Transportation.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the Minister of Transportation that he is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip.

Mr. Levac: The same commitment: that we will endeavour to get those answers as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.” On March 19, 2007, the member for Whitby-Ajax placed on the order paper a written question asking the Attorney General to “please provide the list of every office which is rented or leased by the ministry, whom it is rented and/or leased from and the monthly rental and/or lease cost associated with the relevant office(s).”

By our count, this is the 28th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than enough time to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to table this answer today.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'll recognize you next.

I want to remind the Attorney General that he is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask him to give this House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip.

Mr. Levac: The same commitment: We'll endeavour to get those answers as quickly as possible.

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Not to trivialize this point of order, but I'd like to suggest that the Minister of Transportation is a wonderful woman, and while in legal terms very often it's the male gender that's referenced, I'd like the record changed to recognize the female gender in this instance. It's “her” and “she.”

The Acting Speaker: The point is well taken. My apologies.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is under the same order. I think it would be good if I

actually read 97(d) completely, because the minister does have other options as well as answering.

“(d) The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days, unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming”—so the minister can say that this requires more time and give notice to us, or that it’s very costly to produce it, and then usually there is a negotiation that goes on with the MPP who asked so that it would become less costly—“or that he or she declines to answer, in which case” they have to make a notation and inform the clerks of that notation, and that will be indicated in “the Orders and Notices paper following the question indicating that the minister has made” this particular notation. As well, if there is an interim answer, that’s noted in the order paper. They’re also required to then peg a date when the answer will be available.

1540

In this particular case, I’m drawing attention to the question that was put by the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, Mr. Tascona. This was again placed on March 19, more than a month and a half ago now, but also 28 sitting days ago.

The standing order is clear that the minister is required to respond, either in an interim way or in a full way, within 24 sitting days. This has not been done in this case, and I would ask you to respond to the question put to the Minister of Government Services to provide a list of the measures being considered by the Ontario government to stop the fraudulent use of powers of attorney in land and mortgage transactions in the manner that specifically impacted Paul Revicksy and Elisabeth Shepherd. Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to ask the Minister of Government Services to respond to that in the near future.

The Acting Speaker: I would remind the Minister of Government Services that he is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I appreciate the member from Lanark–Carleton’s review of the actual order we’re quoting. We’ll commit to the same thing I’ve done up to this point, and that is to say that the minister will be responding as quickly as possible.

Ms. MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’d like to draw your attention yet again to standing order 97(d). It states: “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.”

On December 21, 2006, the member for Durham placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to please provide the number of full-time, part-time and contract employees employed by the ministry, broken down for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006.

By our count, this is the 29th sitting day since the question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The

minister has had more than four months to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the Minister of Transportation to table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the Minister of Transportation that she is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I give my undertaking that the answer will be forthcoming as quickly as possible.

Mr. Murdoch: I’d like to draw your attention to the same standing order—97—which states: “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.”

On March 19, 2007, the member for York North placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to please provide the list and cost of every consultant hired or contracted by the ministry since October 2, 2003. I understand that this is to be done within 24 sitting days, and I think we’re at 28 right now. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you could see that the minister answer the question today for us.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the Minister of Community and Social Services that she is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I make the same commitment to the member opposite that we will do as best we can to get the answer as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states: “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.”

On March 19, 2007, the member for Whitby–Ajax placed on the order paper a written question asking the Attorney General to please provide the list and cost of every review, study, commission, audit and consultation, including the date which it was announced, the date when it was completed and the date the government officially responded that the ministry has commenced since October 2, 2003.

By our count, this is the 28th sitting day since the question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than enough time to answer this question, and I would ask that you direct the minister to table the answers today.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the Attorney General that he is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I will give my undertaking that the Attorney General will be reminded and asked to give this answer as quickly as possible.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On March 19 this year, the member for Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, placed on the order paper a written question, which he's entitled to do, asking the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to please provide the list and cost of every review, study, commission, audit and consultation, including the date on which it was announced, the date when it was completed and the date the government officially responded, that the ministry has commenced since October 2, 2003.

Again, this is another example where a minister has failed to meet the requirements of standing order 97(d). The minister is required to respond within 24 sitting days. By my count, this is not only a month and a half in real time, but it's the 28th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper, and I would ask you to request of the minister that he respond immediately.

The Acting Speaker: I wish to remind the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that he is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: A commitment will be made to find that answer out as quickly as possible for the member who asked it.

Ms. MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days."

On December 21, 2006, the member for Durham placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to please provide the list of every office which is rented or leased by the ministry, whom it is rented and/or leased from, and the monthly rental and/or lease cost associated with the relevant offices.

Today is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than four months to respond to this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to stop stalling and to table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: Minister of Transportation, I want to remind you that you are required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Your response is now overdue, and I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: Of course, we reject any stalling or stonewalling, and we will comply as quickly as possible according to the standing orders.

On a point of order, Speaker: This is a question regarding the use of 97(d). In 1999, I submitted some questions I still haven't got answers for. Is it right for us to ask the opposition to give the answers to the questions I asked back in 1999?

The Acting Speaker: The point of order is not well taken. Inasmuch as the questions you asked in 1999 were

not answered, those ministers no longer hold ministerial office and therefore, no, you cannot.

Mr. Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just to relate to that, I'm sure that member will be able to ask those questions within a few months, and I'm sure people will enjoy answering them for him.

Interjection.

Mr. Murdoch: They will be.

Interjection.

Mr. Murdoch: Mr. Speaker, they enjoy my arrogance, but you know I've never found so much arrogance in 17 years as I've seen on the other side.

1550

Now my point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97. It states that the minister shall answer such written questions within 24 days. On March 19, 2007, the member from York North, Julia Munro, placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to "please provide the number of full-time, part-time, and contract employees employed by the ministry, broken down for the years 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006." And by the count, as you've heard, that this is more than 24 days—it's actually 28 days since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like you to ask the minister if they could answer those questions today for us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Community and Social Services, I would remind her that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip?

Mr. Levac: Mr. Speaker, I'll make the undertaking that the minister will be giving that answer as quickly as possible.

I would also like to point out that unfortunately some of the responses that have been asked for may have been acted upon, but they need to get to the table first to show that they can respond to you and the other members. So there are probably going to be some cases that have been asked that there will be some responses, but that will be notified at a later date.

The Acting Speaker: On his point of order, the explanation is fine, but the requirement is fairly strong. It's fairly steadfast in the rules of order for 24 days. By my count, this is about 11 or 12 in a row that have not been met, so I would hope that the chief government whip will take the message back to the various ministers that the 24-day time is kind of steadfast. There is, under the standing rules, an option, if it cannot be met, for them to so advise.

Mr. Levac: A point of order on that, Mr. Speaker: On your comment, I will continue to reiterate that I'm making that undertaking that I will ask those ministers to respond.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Halton.

Mr. Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." On December 21, 2006—we're getting back towards 1999—last year, the member for Simcoe Grey placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to "please provide the list and cost of every review, study, commission, audit, consultation, including the date which it was announced, the date when it was completed and the date the government officially responded, that the ministry has commenced since October 2, 2003."

By our count, Mr. Speaker, this is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than four months to answer this question. I ask you to direct the minister to table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Transportation, I want to remind her that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I give the undertaking that the minister will be notified and will get the answer as quickly as possible. In terms of responding to the members opposite, if they want to do it as a lump, we'll do it all together, if they'd like.

Mr. Sterling: Mr. Speaker, I think part of this exercise is to show that there are many ministers in contravention of 97(d) and many questions. So I bring another question here under standing order 97(d), a question put forward on March 19 by the member for Whitby-Ajax, Mrs. Elliott, to the Attorney General. The question was, "Please provide a list, including cost, of every funding announcement the ministry has made since October 2, 2003, broken down by the date of the announcement and the impact on specific ridings."

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out under section 97 that there is also another provision in addition to the ones that I've already mentioned. I point to 97(f): "If a minister is of the opinion that any written question under the standing order requires by way of reply any statement of facts, or records, or statistics of a lengthy or a voluminous nature, the minister may require it to be made a motion for a return." In other words, the minister can actually come to this House and make the question a point of debate in the House, where he can then say, "This is too difficult a task to undertake." He can also have a debate over what that particular request brings to the fore in terms of opinion by members of the House.

The one that I am mentioning here by the Attorney General has been on the order paper for 28 sitting days. The Attorney General, the chief law officer of the crown, who, of all, should be responding to our rules and regulations, has had this for more than 24 sitting days, as clearly set out in the standing orders. I would ask, of all

of the ministers, that the Attorney General respond in accordance with our standing orders.

The Acting Speaker: To the Attorney General: I want to remind him that he is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask him to give this House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I will give my undertaking that the minister will be made aware and will respond as quickly as possible.

Mr. Murdoch: On another point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's on the same standing order, 97(d). As you know, it states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." We have another one here that unfortunately hasn't been answered. On March 19, 2007, again, the member from York North, Julia Munro, placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to please provide the list and cost of every review, study, commission, audit and consultation, including the date it was announced, the date when it was completed and the date the government officially responded, that the ministry has commenced since October 2, 2003.

Again, I count the days and it's 28 days, so we are overdue. It's another one, so with your guidance, Mr. Speaker, if you could see that we could get an answer today it would be appreciated.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Community and Social Services: I want to remind her that she is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I give my undertaking that the minister will be notified and the answer will be provided as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." On December 21, 2006, the member for Simcoe-Grey placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to please provide a list of all ministerial letter appointments made since October 2, 2003, with information about when the term of appointment began and ended or ends.

By our count, this is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper and no answer has been forthcoming or given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than four months to answer this question, and I ask you to direct the minister to table the answer forthwith.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Transportation: I want to remind her that she is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I give my undertaking that the answer will be forthcoming as quickly as possible.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm ready to call the orders of the day. I'm prepared to call government order G174.

The Acting Speaker: I don't believe that is a point of order, but thank you. We know how anxious you are.

1600

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Under section 97(d)—this relates to order paper questions, questions put in writing by members of the Legislature to ministers. This is a most important right that we, as MPPs, have in this House because it's our only chance to get data and information in an organized fashion, as we wish it, from the ministers. Under the freedom-of-information act, we do not have the right to ask for data to be organized in a fashion in which we would like it to be organized. Under the freedom-of-information act, our only right is to ask for a particular document of a ministry. There are supposed to be time constraints on receiving that, but often ministries are lacking in meeting those time constraints.

On March 19, the member for Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, placed an order paper question asking the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to please provide a list of all ministerial letter appointments made since October 2, 2003, with information about the term of appointment—when it began and when it ended. This particular order paper question was given 28 sitting days ago. Section 97(d) is clear that an answer is required in 24 sitting days. I would ask you to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to please pay regard to our standing orders, our rules of the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: I want to remind him that he is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: My undertaking will be to make the minister aware and to also make sure that the minister answers as quickly as possible.

Mr. Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It seems too bad that ministers can't answer questions when they're orally asked, and now it seems that they can't answer questions when we've asked them on paper. It does really seem that something has broken down on the side of the government.

But I have another point of order: Standing order 97(d) says, "The minister shall answer" written questions within 24 days. On March 19, 2007, the member for York North, Julia Munro, placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to please provide the list of every office which is rented or leased by the ministry, from whom it is rented and/or leased, and the monthly rental and/or

lease cost associated with the relevant offices. It is now 28 days since this was asked and we have no answer, as we get no answers in the House when we ask questions. Mr. Speaker, I hope that you could see that something is done about this.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Community and Social Services: I want to remind the minister that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: As I continue to do, I will do an undertaking to make sure that the minister knows that there's been a request for this information. It'll be coming as quickly as possible. I would also like to know if, during these points of order, editorials are within the preview of the point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Is that within the preview or the purview?

Mr. Levac: Purview.

The Acting Speaker: I think that we should try to keep the editorial comment to a minimum. I thank you for that. Any further points of order? Then, orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING BUSINESS THROUGH A SIMPLER TAX SYSTEM ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 VISANT À RENFORCER LES ENTREPRISES GRÂCE À UN RÉGIME FISCAL PLUS SIMPLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2006 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 174, Loi édictant la Loi de 2006 sur les impôts et apportant des modifications complémentaires et autres à diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): It's my understanding that on the last occasion the member from Halton had the floor. I invite him to continue the debate.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The exercise that we've just gone through I think points out the arrogance, as the member from Bruce-Grey pointed out, of the ministers of the crown who give poor or no answers whatsoever when asked an oral question in the House. They also don't answer questions when, under the standing orders, their responses are required within 24 sitting days. Many times that has gone back into 2006. They have had ample time to answer these questions and have failed to do so.

We saw the Minister of Small Business admonished by the conflict-of-interest commissioner and yet remain

in his chair, another act of arrogance. The minister in charge of infrastructure renewal was caught in the Lottogate scandal, tried to spin his way out of it and was unable to do so. Again, while that investigation was going on, the minister maintained his seat, another act of unbelievable arrogance.

Today we're involved with the Minister of Citizenship and the slush fund, where he was flushing this money out the door as quickly as possible to organizations which have an unbelievable relationship with many, many Liberals, the entire board of directors being Liberal donors, the candidates for future elections being involved in it, sitting members of this House providing assistance to these organizations. We don't know where that money went. We have tried to get the Auditor General involved in this situation so we can find out what happened to the taxpayers' hard-earned money that came to this government in good faith. We want to make sure that money is being spent appropriately—and no answer, not one answer that the minister has provided or the Premier has provided or the Minister of Finance has provided has given us any suggestion that that money has been properly spent. It has been flushed out the door as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, unless we are going to discuss the ability of this government to come clean on this issue, then I don't think we should be talking about any other issue. There is nothing more sacred in this place than taxpayers' dollars. For that reason, I will move adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1607 to 1637.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk. Please be seated.

All of those opposed will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Mr. Chudleigh, you have the floor.

Mr. Chudleigh: As we continue, the hour of 4:30 has come and gone and I know that most of our television audience has now gone to watch the Young and the Restless, but the parties on this side of the House, the official opposition and the third party, are indeed restless and we are little young enough to make a protest.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We're not young.

Mr. Chudleigh: We're young. We're not as young as we were yesterday, because today happens to be my birthday. In celebration of my birthday, I can inform the government that we will not be debating anything if we're not debating the slush fund shame that this gov-

ernment is inflicting on Ontario, and I would like to move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There being more than five members standing, call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1640 to 1710.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk. Please be seated.

All those opposed will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 11; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member from Halton has the floor.

Mr. Chudleigh: Again the business of this House has been shut down because of the lack of government commitment to bringing the truth to the floor, to letting the Auditor General go in and find out what the truth of this issue is and to letting the population of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, know how their tax dollars are being spent in this province—a most important issue; in fact, the most important issue that we could debate in this House.

I think I've said enough on this issue. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): It's my pleasure to follow the comments of the member because the simple reality is that we haven't been getting answers. Ian Urquhart, the Toronto Star, wrote a very useful article today, very simply stating that question after question after question is simply responded to with filler. Even my mother, who watches this Legislature, says that she can now say what the minister is going to say before he opens his mouth. She has figured out the lines. She knows them well. I'm very appreciative of her pointing that out but, frankly, we in this House are not well served and the government is not well served by simply ignoring the questions that have been put to the minister.

The minister has been asked for a paper trail. The minister has been asked to set out precisely how he informed all of the groups that are out there that require support, because there is no argument here that new Canadians do need support. They have to have that support for integration into this society. But the reality is that no application forms were out there. Groups were not informed that this whole process was available, that the money was available. So we have to ask the basis upon which the decision was made, and apparently, at least in a number of cases, the basis was simply political.

We have asked that the Auditor General be brought in to assess all that has gone before us, to assess the funds that were allocated, the basis for their allocation, the

nature of the notification that was given to groups, so that people had a fair opportunity to present their case, showing how they would deal with the need that exists in this society. We've heard nothing, nothing except a message track that emphasizes the virtue of the government and, from time to time, attacks the opposition. It is a useless approach.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to respond to the member. I find it curious, and I'm not entirely sure—I'm holding Bill 174, and I can't find a lot about what he has been saying in Bill 174, which, I admit freely, is really not gripping reading because a lot of it deals with amendments to the Taxation Act, with amendments and complementary amendments to the Corporations Information Act. Other clauses deal with the Corporations Tax Act, the Electricity Act, and more with the Income Tax Act, and indeed, some amendments to the Taxpayer Protection Act. The bill is quite extensive. It's some 239 pages, and most of them deal with definitions and means by which different tax credits or other formulas are computed. It's perhaps a bill that only a computer programmer could love. This is what the bill is really all about. This is a bill whose purpose is to simplify the tax act to cut a lot of paperwork. Perhaps members could focus their debate on this particular subject, because that is indeed what we're here to debate this afternoon.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's interesting that the Premier placed so much political importance on this Bill 174 that he created a whole new ministry: the Ministry of Revenue. The minister described himself as the 37-billion-dollar man, with a staff of 28. Now he has a minister's office and a limousine to drive him around in, and this was to bring in one single piece of legislation. What that speaks to is exactly what we've been talking about for the last few weeks, and that is accountability to the taxpayers of Ontario. That's what this is all about. This whole sponsorship, a.k.a. slush fund, a.k.a. sponsorship scandal, is why we've been raising these issues: accountability to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

We have the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration who has been doling it out by the barrel to Liberal-friendly organizations. How are we going to get to the bottom of this? How do we get to the bottom of this? We can't compel the minister to answer questions. Over 200 questions have been asked on this very subject. We cannot compel the minister to answer questions. However, if the Auditor General were authorized to look into this, we would get some answers and the people of the province of Ontario would have some answers before they go to the polls on October 10. What does the government say they'll do? "The auditor has the opportunity to look at this." The auditor has no problem getting to the bottom of it. Oh, yes, but that report, in the due course of things, would not be released until after the election of October 10. What have they got to hide? If you have nothing to hide, come clean. Let the auditor look into this mess so that the people of the province of

Ontario can base their vote on the facts, not some Liberal spin. It's a disgrace.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I want to start by thanking the member for Halton North for his initiative this afternoon. We have witnessed in this House, over the past two weeks, non-answers, distortions and a smear campaign against members on this side of the House who have risen to ask tough but fair questions of this minister and of this government.

This past weekend, as I traversed my riding, attending a number of events, I can tell you this: The topic on people's mind—and this may surprise members on the government side—was not Bill 174; it was the slush fund, or the Collegate slush fund, as we've called it in this House. People in my riding and people across this province are demanding accountability and transparency from this government. We're talking about \$32 million of public money that has been handed out, willy-nilly style, by this government over the past year, if not longer.

When we rise in this House and when we ask for this government to agree to bring in the Auditor General for a comprehensive accounting of this money, if this government were to agree—and I challenge them to agree—then we could resume debating bills in this House. But for as long they do not, the crescendo of the bells is going to increase and go on until we start getting answers from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, from the Premier and from this government. For as long as they refuse, my colleagues with the third party and, I know, the members on the official opposition side will continue in our quest to deliver answers to our constituents and to all of the people of the province. If this government were serious about governing, they would provide the answers which we ask for.

1720

The Acting Speaker: The member from Halton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Chudleigh: I'd like to thank the member for Toronto–Danforth, who eloquently pointed out the article in the Toronto Star this morning by Ian Urquhart, who talked about—you know, there are a lot of members of the press, but there are a few you listen to who have the ability to cut to the chase and to point out exactly what is happening and get a feel for this place. Ian has that feel for this place. I don't always agree with what he writes. Sometimes it's critical of us, but it's always interesting to read, and he always makes a good point. He has made a very good point again this time. This debate that the government has involved itself in with a slush fund is extremely damaging to the government. If there is no smell to this process, why not call in the auditor? Have it done. The auditor could report at some time in the future. But the government is refusing to do this. The very fact that the government is refusing to call in the auditor and clear its good name—I use "good" in quotations; that's a sarcastic comment, I say to the member from western Ontario—and when they refuse to do that simple task of clearing their name—

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Something smells.

Mr. Chudleigh:—something smells. The smell ratchets up every time you refuse to do it. Day after day, week after week, on down the road right up to election day, this smells really bad, and that smell isn't going to get any better with the tactics this government is using.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With respect to the members who have just spoken, I was reluctant to do that, so I didn't, so I'm doing it in between the times. If I'm not mistaken—I'd like clarity—we are speaking about Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2006 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts. Is that not correct, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: That is the bill before the House, Bill 174, I would remind the members. Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent in the House to stand down our lead since our critic happens to be sitting in the chair this afternoon as we debate Bill 174.

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order, but the unanimous consent has been sought. Is it agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: I want to thank the government whip for his most agreeable gesture in giving us this opportunity. I am pleased to rise this afternoon to talk about Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2006 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts. I'm pleased to be our party's first speaker on this act.

I would like to talk about my travels this past weekend throughout the riding of York South-Weston and relay to this House some of the conversations I had with my constituents about this legislation and other issues presently consuming most of the time in this House. On Saturday morning I started my day at the opening day festivities for York minor baseball, an amateur sports organization that has been serving my community now for the better part of four decades, that has hundreds of participants from three and four years old up to 16 and 17 years old, that draws on the experience and expertise of hundreds of volunteers who give of their hours to coach, to umpire, to provide the pre- and post-game snacks for their young charges. I was there for the opening festivities, and as I spoke to some of those parents and volunteers and coaches, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it

was not Bill 174 that they wanted to talk with me about. What they wanted to talk with me about was the government's slush fund, the money this government has been handing out to a host of Liberal-friendly organizations.

Now, we've heard the Minister of Finance declare that the amounts in question are "a pittance." Well, try calling a quarter of a million dollars, three and four and five times over, a pittance when you're talking to a single mom who has to struggle just to be able to afford the \$50 registration fee for her child to play a season with York minor baseball. Try to explain that to her. I ask the government to try to do just that. It is more than just a pittance. The people in my riding are offended by the actions and words of this government in trying to cover up their slush fund. That's what I was getting Saturday morning—

Mr. Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As much as I respect the member's constituents as he's bringing their voice here, and as much as I respect his desire to speak about Bill 174, I haven't heard anything yet other than a denial that Bill 174 is what we're talking about. I would respectfully suggest that he needs to be brought back to talk about the Taxation Act, 2006.

The Acting Speaker: I think the point of order is well taken. I would remind the member that the bill is Bill 174.

Mr. Ferreira: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect, since this government is unwilling to address the issue that has been repeatedly raised in this House over the past two and a half weeks, I would like to make a motion of adjournment on this debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member has moved adjournment of the debate. Is there—I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1727 to 1757.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk. Please be seated.

All those opposed will please stand to be recorded.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 8; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands recessed until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
167A	8566	2	55	person with about \$1,550 each. It is hard to believe that

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A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 7 May 2007

Lundi 7 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 mai 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts, when Bill 218 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly; and

That the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly shall be authorized to meet, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, on Thursday, May 17, 2007, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., if needed for the purpose of conducting public hearings on the bill and that the committee be further authorized to meet on Monday, May 28, 2007, following routine proceedings for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 p.m. on Wednesday, May 23, 2007. No later than 5 p.m. on May 28, 2007, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill, and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than May 29, 2007. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker shall put

the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That on the day the order for third reading for the bill is called, the time available for debate shall be one hour, and the time shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bentley has moved government notice of motion number 353. Mr. Bentley.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The call for democratic renewal is one that is not taken lightly.

Interruption.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: If that's the Premier, tell him I'll be there soon.

The call for democratic renewal is one that is not taken lightly. Indeed, we have been within the existing system since Confederation. The question really is, first, is it appropriate for the people of the province who are governed to have the opportunity to speak about the way they are governed; and, secondly, if given that opportunity, should they be given the opportunity not simply to provide advice, but to provide advice in a meaningful way that will be deemed binding on this assembly?

1850

What we are proposing here is the result of a long consultative process. We made a commitment during the last campaign that we would give the people of this province the right to speak to the issue. We constituted an assembly representative of every riding in the province and we asked that assembly to consider the issue. And if they decided that the existing system was the one we should have, they would make that recommendation. If they thought that a different system would be appropriate for consideration by the people of Ontario, we committed to placing it on the ballot for instruction by the people of the province of Ontario. That is exactly what we have done and are proposing to do.

This is an extremely important stage in the history of the province of Ontario. It is important not because some

may wish to change and others may not wish to change. It is important because we are asking the people how they wish to be governed. At the end of the day, none of us were there in 1867. Notwithstanding one's longevity in the House, none of us were there. But all of us care deeply and passionately about the process, deeply and passionately about how we are to be governed, deeply and passionately about how we choose our elected representative—

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to know how the minister knows that I wasn't there.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to hear him answer that, too, but that's not a point of order. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I say very directly to the Speaker that although we all know and respect the long service of the member from Lanark–Carleton, I always took him to be less than 30 years of age and wondered at how he achieved those years of experience given the way he presents in this House.

I simply say to the members of this House that it is appropriate, after the debate that this motion will entail—let us get on with the process. Let's join to pass the bill as quickly as possible. It is ultimately the people of the province who decide how they are governed and going to be governed. They're going to be given that opportunity with the passage of this process. It's right. It's appropriate. Just the posing of the question is the renewal that we seek. The result should be in the hands of the people. I say, let's get on with it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Sterling: I appreciate the comments by the minister with respect to Bill 218, but Bill 218, for the information of people who might be tuned in, doesn't really deal extensively with the referendum. It deals with only one part of the referendum vote, and that is with regard to education of the people, giving that responsibility to the election official, Mr. Hollins. This bill generally deals with a number of other matters, and I think they are of interest to the people. Perhaps I'll just go through what some of those changes are.

I want to say, at the outset, that we support some of these amendments to this particular bill. It's ironic, though, that we are doing this sort of at the 11th hour, at the final legislative session, particularly when many of these recommendations were made by the Chief Electoral Officer some two and a half years ago. I thought that it would have been better to have these particular rule changes, law changes out there earlier so that people who are interested in the process would have an opportunity to come and talk about them at length, because some of them are pretty important in terms of how the election comes out.

One change that every elector, every voter will see is on the ballot. On the ballot, for the first time, it will have the name of the candidate. For instance, it could have "Bruce Crozier, Progressive Conservative candidate for Essex" or something like that. That would be an example of what could appear on the ballot. That particular

designation as the Progressive Conservative candidate for Essex would have to be approved by the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and I don't think that would happen in this particular case. But that's one significant change with regard to this.

One of the problems we have with Bill 218 is that it's somewhat dovetailing with Bill 62. You remember that Bill 62 was the one with regard to the registration of political parties. That particular bill is in response to a lawsuit which has been taken out by some individuals with regard to their ability to have their freedom of speech in the election.

So this bill coming at the very late stages, along with Bill 62, which has been pulled by the government and tucked into about a 200-page bill, the budget bill, in schedule 11, makes this debate somewhat complex and convoluted. The problem is that people have to take into consideration what the combination effect of a number of things that will happen in this next election campaign will be. On October 10, we're going to have a referendum; we're going to have a changing, as I mentioned earlier, of the ballot; we're going to have a change with regard to what third parties can do in an election; and we're going to have a change in terms of the election process. So all of these things add up to significant change—not all bad, but they are change. I think it's important for people to learn what these changes are about.

We also know, of course, as I mentioned earlier, that there is going to be a referendum debate that will no doubt take place. Talking to a number of people in my party recently, very recently, about what the referendum proposal is, they're very interested in that, but it takes a fair bit of explanation as well.

So here we are at Bill 218. This comes, again, with a guillotine motion. Oddly enough, because these bills were not introduced earlier in the legislative session, we are coming down to the final wire, and the government finds that in the democratic renewal, bills changing our method of electing people and changing somewhat the structure of this place are having to be time-allocated or guillotined in the debate—probably the worst kind of bills for which you could possibly undertake that.

We found that Bill 155, the electoral reform act, the bill that actually dealt with the referendum and the 60% threshold debate, came under a guillotine motion. In other words, the government limited the debate on that particular bill and the debate in the Legislature. That's not a very good sign when a government says, "We're going to undergo democratic reform, but we're going to cut off debate on that democratic reform," especially since most of these changes to our system have come with little consultation with the opposition. The only consultation we've had is the select committee on electoral reform, which only occurred because of the constant pounding that the government took from the opposition on that particular issue.

1900

Now, another thing that's happening with regard to this election coming on October 10 is that this will be the

first election where the government has arbitrarily set the electoral boundaries in the province of Ontario since before 1950. From 1950 until now there has always been a boundaries commission which has met and set the boundaries of the various different ridings. I believe if somebody went to the courts and challenged this in a constitutional sense, they'd win, because we now have some ridings that are very light in population, less than 35% of some other ridings, and we have some ridings that are very excessive in terms of their population. So in the next Ontario election, in some ridings a vote counts almost twice as much as in other areas.

I proposed in a bill before this House that we set a boundaries commission, we retain 11 ridings in the north and let the boundaries commission decide on the number of ridings overall in the province of Ontario in order to keep within the 25% sleeve that the Supreme Court of Canada has decided is reasonable.

I mentioned with regard to Bill 62, which was a bill that was brought to this Legislature I think early in February—yes, it was introduced in February 2006. I can remember one night at quarter to seven coming back from dinner into this place and, unfortunately, there weren't any NDP members here and there weren't any Conservative members here right at the crack of quarter to 7. Here's Bill 62 trying to change how parties are registered in this province. I'm walking in the back door and there are a few Liberals here, including the Minister of Natural Resources. As I walked around the corner, I heard the Minister of Natural Resources try to cut off debate and move second and third reading without further debate because we didn't get back from dinner on time. That's the kind of attitude we've dealt with with regard to democratic reform, and that really reveals the true nature of this government's abysmal show on bringing forward various pieces of legislation to try to change our democratic process. I couldn't believe it—a more inappropriate type of bill that you would try that kind of stunt on. Fortunately, I said no as I walked to my seat, and the Speaker caught me and said okay.

I will say that Mr. Bradley, who was the House leader sitting in the House at the time, would have said no as well to his own minister. In fact, that's what he indicated to me after, and I take his word on that, because it was a very imprudent step made on the part of one of the ministers of the crown.

This Bill 62, which is buried as schedule 11 in the budget bill, is a pretty important bill for us. Now, the reason the government brought it forward is because Elizabeth White, the leader of the Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Ontario, took the government to court claiming that their freedom of speech was being restricted by the province's party registration rules. That's the lawsuit, and if you read the pleadings—in other words, the documentation regarding that lawsuit, which I have—the government responded and said, in short, to the court, "Wait, we will change the legislation with regard to this."

Now, the reason that Elizabeth White and her group are bringing this forward is that they had some success at the federal level, the Figueroa decision at the Supreme Court of Canada. That decision said that a third party which wanted to put forward their views with regard to an issue was lacking freedom of speech because they were restricted in the amount of money they could spend on their campaign—restricted, I believe, to \$150,000. A third party advertising in a federal election can only spend up to \$150,000 with regard to encouraging you to vote for this party or that party because they favour your particular position.

Now, that drove the need for Bill 62. We thought the government had sort of pushed back Bill 62, forgotten about it, put it on the back burner and put it away. Then, all of a sudden, as we're reading through this 200-plus-page budget bill, we find Bill 62 inserted as schedule 11 in that bill. That bill takes the present requirement to form a party from running candidates in half of the ridings—it would be 107 divided by two, so you'd have to have candidates under the old rules in 54 of the ridings in order to call yourself a party and have all of the rights with regard to getting contributions and those kinds of things—down from 54 to two. So now two people, members of the public, running in two constituencies can form a political party in the next election. Now, I would agree with Bill 62, go with Bill 62, if in Bill 218 you restrict third party advertising, which you don't do in this bill.

So what you've done is you've put two pieces together that don't match. You've said in Bill 218 that third parties have to register and that they have to report their contributions, but they don't have to report those contributions until six months after the election. We know in the last election—our party knows—that we had a group called—what was it called? Friends of the family or whatever it was. It was lead by a family group—I forget what the exact—

Interjection.

Mr. Sterling: The coalition of families or whatever it was. Really, it was a number of unions joining together to advertise against our party.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "Not this time, Ernie."

Mr. Sterling: Yes, they had this phrase, "Not this time, Ernie."

In our view, these groups were misleading the public with regard to who they represented and put forward.

Now, I don't mind dropping the rules as to how you form parties, because you can form a party and then put forward your platform and do all the rest with two members. I would agree with that. But you have to restrict what outside people are going to do in the third party situation. So I really believe that the government is running away from the Figueroa decision with undue haste. I don't think they have to run away from it.

There are sections of this bill which I think we can all support because the Chief Election Officer made these before. We give the Chief Election Officer the right to determine identification, better identification, photo iden-

tification, which I think everybody agrees has to come at some point in time.

I'm going through my notes here. The other parts of the bill—I also wanted to recognize my friend Richard Patten, who's retiring, who has been a strong supporter of putting the parties on the ballot and has introduced a private member's bill on a number of occasions with regard to that. The government has followed his suggestion, and I think he should get his due credit for coming forward with that particular suggestion.

This bill also removes the blackout period at the beginning of an election for advertising. When you have a fixed date, there's no reason to have a blackout. It also increases the number of advance polling dates significantly, which I think can be done now because of the known date of the election.

Again, I must say that when they came to giving the authority to the Chief Election Officer to run the public education campaign regarding the upcoming referendum, there really was no consultation with the opposition parties to decide as to how best the education for that particular referendum should take place. I think that's a lack in regard to this bill.

The McGuinty government has continued to talk—and talked about it in the last campaign—about the many promises about respecting MPPs and increasing the role of MPPs in government. One of the problems with the democratic reform of this particular government has been that they've forgotten some of the basic tenets of our British parliamentary system. One of the most important parts of our democratic system under the British parliamentary system is ministerial responsibility. We have seen over the last three weeks a minister stand in his place and be unable to answer questions with regard to his conduct in running a significant government program. He has not been able to explain his situation with regard to that program. There appears not to be a program. It appears that the minister has given out money willy-nilly to the friends of the Liberal Party. You can't have democratic reform if you don't respect the institution which is the foundation of the whole place.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate, because this government does not understand the basic tenets of the British parliamentary system, and we need not go forward with new democratic reform until they live up to the present traditions of this institution.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1913 to 1943.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand. Take your seats.

All those opposed, please stand. Take your seats, please.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 9; the nays are 26.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Sterling: Because of this government's total lack of responsibility towards ministerial responsibility, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1945 to 2015.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour, please stand. Take your seats.

All those opposed, please stand. Take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 9; the nays are 27.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Lanark-Carleton.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague the member from Lanark-Carleton was saying, here we are debating what is essentially a bill on democracy and we have a situation where the government for a month now has refused to answer any questions in regard to the Slushgate affair. I think the government needs to think about that and to allow what we've been asking for, which is to send this thing off to public accounts or to the provincial auditor in order to look into this issue so we can have some clarity. And for them to think about it, I will move for adjournment of this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2017 to 2047.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand. Take your seats, please.

All those opposed, please stand. Take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 8; the nays are 29.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I do believe the government really needs to think about this more seriously and needs to take a look at making sure that we're able to call the Provincial Auditor in to review the Collegate affair. For that, and to give them a chance for pause, I would move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2049 to 2119.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bisson has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 6; the nays are 29.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Mr. Bentley has moved government notice of motion number 353. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2120 to 2130.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogianni, Marie	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Matthews, Deborah	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	McNeely, Phil	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Smith, Monique
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Smitherman, George
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Hoy, Pat	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Murdoch, Bill	
Martel, Shelley	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 30; the nays are 7.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 9:30 of the clock, this House is adjourned until Tuesday, May 8, at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 2132.

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Tuesday 8 May 2007

Mardi 8 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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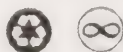
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 mai 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CONSERVATION OFFICERS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): It is not often I go to rallies with OPSEU members, but I joined them this week in Owen Sound because it was for a very good cause. It was a fundraiser for conservation officers' gas money.

As you know, our COs, whose role it is to protect our resources, have no money to put gas in their trucks, ATVs and boats, because this government prefers them working behind a desk. Instead of patrolling our land, water and wildlife, the COs are being forced to shuffle paper.

There are only 110 MNR trucks left in service today. There used to be over 257 in 1992. Law and regulation enforcement targets have been cut by 40%. For 15 years, governments of all stripes have been trimming the MNR, and look where it got us. Today, we hold fundraisers, cookie and bake sales to keep the essential services alive.

Comparing to last year, in 2006 alone, almost 300 seasonal contracts for staff started a week later; 319 seasonal contracts ended a week earlier; 61 seasonal contracts had working hours reduced to 36 from 40 hours a week; 47 vacant seasonal positions from last year were not filled; and 82 regular, full-time student positions were not filled.

We know that cuts in staffing and operating budgets have resulted in MNR's declining enforcement statistics. Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller too warns that these cuts will lead to a catastrophe.

Save the MNR. Give back patrol time. Let's save the MNR.

DON MONTGOMERY

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to Don Montgomery, who passed away this past April 13, 2007.

As a Scarborough hockey player and coach myself, as the father of a young Scarborough hockey player, like so many in our community, Don Montgomery touched my life in many, many ways.

Don was president of the Scarborough Hockey Association for 40 years, founding president of the Scar-

borough Girls Hockey League, and instrumental in local softball in Scarborough. He started the J.J. Keay hockey tournament that has provided fun and enjoyment for thousands of young hockey players throughout the years but has also raised significant dollars for our local hospitals.

Those involved in sports will tell you that running a successful minor hockey organization can be a thankless task. But Don never complained, never lost his composure, never asked for anything for himself. He knew that what he was doing had an impact on the lives of our young people and simply did his job. He was strong, he was resilient, he was a true community leader.

Don never lost his passion for young people. I'll never forget seeing Don at Mid-Scarborough Arena, where his office was located, in the wee hours of the morning while I took my son Kennedy there skating during the week. Kennedy knew that as soon as he got his little skates off, Don would be waiting for him in the office to offer words of encouragement and limitless jelly beans from the jar he kept on his desk.

On behalf of the Ontario Legislature, I extend condolences to Don's wife, Mary, and his children. Knowing that Don Montgomery's legacy will go on forever in the hearts, minds and endeavours of each and every one of the young Scarborough boys and girls whose lives have been influenced and whose character has been built through the joy of playing hockey thanks to the love and passion of Don Montgomery.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Following on the incompetence of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and his Lottogate scandal and the embarrassing position the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has put the McGuinty Liberals in with the slush fund scam, we now have another \$330,000 being wasted with the so-called replacement of Liberal-appointed Jane Stewart as a negotiator in the Caledonia occupation. Imagine being paid \$1,300 per day and ending up with no results.

As Janie Jamieson, spokesperson for the aboriginal protestors, says, "Having Jane Stewart at the table ... all the time and money spent on her. How much is there to show for that? Not much at all."

The citizens of Ontario are frustrated, humiliated and outraged with the fiasco in Caledonia. We are now on day 433 of the land occupation. It has cost the OPP tens of millions of taxpayer dollars out of their budget. It has cost the Ontario taxpayer millions of dollars in land

purchases—lands that are still under occupation. The McGuinty Liberals have promised compensation for Caledonia residents and broken those promises. What have we achieved? Absolutely nothing.

Ontario taxpayers deserve much better use of their valuable tax dollars, but what is one to expect when the captain of the slush fund team is also the part-time Minister of Finance and chair of the Liberal re-election campaign?

We have seen no leadership from Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government. They don't even have the courage to visit Caledonia, unlike our leader, John Tory. Somebody over there on the Liberal side should have remembered that the Chrétien human resources minister responsible for the billion-dollar boondoggle was probably a poor choice as a negotiator in the very beginning.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): Today, Ontarians learned more about the full scale of Liberals' mega nuclear plan. Up to eight new reactors are under consideration, not two, a figure the Liberals referred to when they tried to downplay their nuclear ambitions. I have to point out that the irony is not lost on many of us that the latest details about the Liberals' nuclear plan come on the heels of them attacking the Conservatives for their endorsement of nuclear.

The Liberals again turned to the message of nuclear being clean energy and a solution to climate change. Nuclear, like fossil fuels, is environmentally unsustainable. Emissions from fossil fuels have put us in the climate situation we face today. Nuclear generates dangerous radioactive waste that poses a threat for centuries. And nuclear doesn't mesh with Kyoto timelines: It takes 10 to 12 years to build a reactor.

Sustainable energy experts like Amory Lovins, from the Rocky Mountain Institute, whose analysis on major energy issues has proven to be prescient time and again, writes that cost alone should sideline nuclear as an option as we develop our next generation of energy sources: geothermal, solar, wind, cogeneration, distributed generation, efficiency and conservation. Spending on nuclear power will keep us from a sustainable, fossil fuel-free energy future, and will starve green solutions of the funds they need.

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I can't understand why the members opposite can't bring good, positive news, like I'm going to do today, to bring you up to date on the government's continued efforts to save lives by making automated external heart defibrillators more readily available. As an MPP who has been advocating for the increased availability and use of defibrillators, I was thrilled with Minister Watson's recent announcement to commit \$3 million to an Ontario-wide program allowing municipalities to apply for automated external defibril-

lators and related training for their communities. Studies show that using an AED, combined with CPR within the first few minutes of a cardiac arrest can improve survival rates from 5% to 50% or more. Our government will continue to work closely with Rocco Rossi and the rest of the Heart and Stroke Foundation to put 1,000 defibrillators in communities across this province. Letters are being sent to all municipal emergency management services, paramedics and other relevant service providers, explaining the application process, but I encourage all members to work with other community leaders in their ridings to ensure that their constituents benefit from this historic investment.

1340

I plan on doing just that, because the people of my riding of Essex deserve the security offered by having AEDs readily available—with EMS services in your community to put defibrillators where they're needed most.

Of course, my bill, in the larger health bill, the Chase McEachern Act, will definitely be well—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Members' statements.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo—Wellington): For weeks now, the Legislature has been consumed with Lottogate and now the McGuinty Liberal government's slush fund scandal. As we now know, up to \$32 million was handed out to 110 groups without the normal accountability provisions which taxpayers would expect and have every right to demand. In fact, it appears that some of the groups didn't even make an application to justify their need. They simply had to establish their Liberal Party credentials and connections to get the cash—up to a quarter of a million dollars, in some cases.

In his initial defence of his slush fund, the Minister of Citizenship attempted to spread the blame for his ministry's year-end spending spree to his cabinet colleagues, and in particular, the Minister of Finance. It's no wonder, because day by day, we're learning new details of Liberal insiders working in various ministers' offices, receiving these cheques intended to purchase support for the Ontario Liberal Party. Today's Toronto Star reveals that a former assistant to the Minister of Health is now a director of the Iranian-Canadian organization which received \$200,000 from the Minister of Citizenship's slush fund. How convenient.

Now it appears that the Minister of Citizenship, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the Minister of Culture, and now the Minister of Health, are all implicated in this growing scandal. With Liberal MPPs getting more nervous by the day, the Minister of Citizenship has had more than 200 opportunities in this House to keep his commitment to release the criteria and explain the process as to how this money was allocated. He has refused to do so and implicated the

entire government in the scandal. He must resign and call in the Auditor General.

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I rise today to share the McGuinty government record on agriculture and to speak proudly of our continued commitment to rural Ontario and our farmers.

Our government believes that supply-managed commodities not only help to stabilize income for Ontario's farmers, but also serve to ensure a reliable supply of Ontario-based foods. Our government recognizes the need for long-term planning and the importance of putting the tools in place to help ensure the future success of our agri-food sector. That is why farmers all across Ontario are expressing concern about the weekend nomination of Randy Hillier as a candidate for the PC Party. A right-wing radical extremist, Hillier is an outspoken critic of supply management and Ontario's nutrient management strategy—something the previous government introduced, never delivered on and failed to fund. In contrast, our government has delivered some \$23.7 million in nutrient management support.

While the new Conservative candidate brags openly in the *Colborne Chronicle* of his intent to shape Tory agricultural policy, for many farmers this is a frightening thought. It is clear that no one wants to see a return to the regressive tax cuts of the Harris regime. It's our duty to continue moving forward and to work with our agricultural partners to embrace positive change.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): My phone has been ringing off the hook since about Saturday afternoon. The supply-managed farmers in my riding just want to know what's up. They want to know if the party opposite is in support of supply management, or are they in support of their new candidate in the grand riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox–Addington? They have a candidate who has been very clear about being opposed to supply management. He said that many times on the record. I heard the members opposite talk about how they were for supply management. I heard them all get up here and vote about it. They all bragged about the fact that they had signed FarmGate5, but I wonder whether or not their new candidate has done that.

Do you know the interesting thing about that nomination speech? Do you know whom he didn't mention, not even once? Why, the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, their leader, Mr. Tory. And what party did he fail to recognize when he got the Progressive Conservative nomination? He failed to recognize the Progressive Conservative Party. Not even once was he willing to stand in his place at a nomination meeting for his party and say the words "Progressive Conservative," to say the words "My leader, John Tory."

We need to know, and my supply-managed farmers need to know, who is driving the bus over there. Is it their new candidate, who says their platform is still a

work in progress and he's going to influence it, or is it their leader? Time will tell.

NURSES

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise in the House today to talk about the incredible work that is being done by Ontario nurses. Nurses are the heart of our health care system, and we want to have the supports in place to make sure Ontario is their location of choice. The McGuinty Liberals have already invested \$317 million for nursing to date, and there are now 5,400 new confirmed positions in place.

We also know that nurses are on the front lines every day, working for the health of all Ontarians. We now have 10% more nurses working full-time, or 61.4%. That's real progress.

We're also focusing on creating more opportunities for nurses. Two new roles are being developed by HealthForceOntario: nurse endoscopists and surgical first assistants. We believe, like Doris Grinspun said in February 2007, that "Ontario has the real potential to become the first North American jurisdiction to make nursing shortage history."

While under the previous government there were 8,000 fewer nurses working in their first three years, we are creating a climate to help nurses enjoy their profession again. We won't let the member opposite take \$2.5 billion from our health care system and put it into private, for-profit care.

I had the incredible privilege of going out to the Trillium hospital and joining our nurses for a day. They do incredible work. We respect them and we look forward to working with them in time to come.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday marked the beginning of Children's Mental Health Week, and today we have some visitors from Children's Mental Health Ontario here. I thought, in support of Children's Mental Health Ontario and children with mental illness, that I could receive unanimous consent from all members of the Legislative Assembly to wear this green ribbon.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Ms. MacLeod has asked for unanimous consent to wear the green ribbon signifying Children's Mental Health Week. Agreed? Agreed.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House

Leader): I just happen to have one right here and it says the following:

I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 8, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 345. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Patten, Richard	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq	
Gravelle, Michael	Racco, Mario G.	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Savoline, Joyce
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Scott, Laurie
Ferreira, Paul	Murdoch, Bill	Tabuns, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Tascona, Joseph N.
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 40; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I am pleased to rise in the House today, during Children's Mental Health Week, to speak about our government's commitment to improv-

ing supports for children and youth with mental health challenges.

For too long, mental health has been a taboo subject. As a result, many people have suffered in silence and without the supports required to enable them to reach their true potential.

Studies suggest that approximately half a million young Ontarians have a mental health-related challenge which can affect their ability to function adequately on a day-to-day basis.

We know that, left untreated, children and youth with mental health challenges will face even greater challenges as adults.

Sadly, many young people and their families hesitate to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental illness. A recent study released by Kinark Child and Family Services found that 38% of Canadian adults would be embarrassed to admit their child or teen is struggling with a mental health issue. Results of another study released last month by the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre found that about 50% of Canadian adolescents who are depressed or suicidal are not accessing mental health services because they and, in many cases, their families are embarrassed.

But it doesn't need to be this way. Children and youth with mental health challenges can live happy and productive lives if they are provided with the treatment and support that they need. This week is an opportunity for all of us to become more aware of the importance of removing this painful and damaging stigma so that more young people can get the support and services they need.

We need to help children and youth, their families and the general public to understand that mental health is just as important as physical health.

Our government believes it is essential that we help provide these children and youth with the support they need to ensure that their abilities can indeed overshadow the challenges they experience in life.

As Minister of Children and Youth Services, I've had the opportunity to hear from children and youth about the challenges they face and the supports they need. I have also listened to the agencies that serve them, their parents and grandparents, their caregivers, their teachers and others, all of whom have taught me a great deal. Our government shares their vision for child and youth mental health.

We envision an Ontario where mental health services are delivered in an integrated way within a system that places children, youth and their families at its very core, and where the system fits the needs of the child and family, as opposed to the child and family being expected to somehow fit into the system.

1400

I have visited several centres that provide services and supports to children and youth with mental health challenges, including the Thunder Bay Children's Centre and Madame Vanier Children's Services in London, the York Centre in Richmond Hill, Kinark Child and Family Services in Markham, New Path Youth and Family

Counselling Services in Barrie, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa, East Metro Youth Services and Youthlink in Scarborough, the George Hull Centre for Children and Families in Etobicoke, Lutherwood in Waterloo and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Clinic in Guelph.

These organizations, as well as hundreds of others across the province, play an essential role in supporting children and youth with social and behavioural problems and mental health disorders, some of whom may also have other challenges such as autism spectrum disorders. The dedicated staff, generous volunteers and valuable programs in these centres are important to children and youth in helping them to believe in themselves and to learn how to achieve their best performance.

In March of this year I announced that our government is making further investments to strengthen mental health services for children and youth. Mr. Speaker, \$24.5 million in new funding includes a 5% increase, totalling \$18 million in base annual funding for child and youth mental health agencies across the province, to reduce wait times and to help address cost pressures.

This is a second increase in base funding for the child and youth mental health sector that has been provided by our government since 2004. Prior to the 2004 budget, this sector had not received a base increase for 12 consecutive years. We are also investing \$4.5 million province-wide in annual regional allocations to address community priorities, based on the new policy framework for child and youth mental health developed by my ministry and the children's mental health sector. Local funding allocations will be determined through collaborative community-based processes so that the money goes where it is most needed to help provide the supports that our kids need in the most effective ways.

As part of the most recent announcement, a new fund of \$2 million will be allocated annually to enable agencies to provide immediate child and youth mental health support when a local community is faced with an extraordinary crisis or circumstance. Through these new measures, our government is building on its previous investments in more than 260 child and youth mental health agencies and 17 hospital-based out-patient programs. As of this year, the government will have increased funding for the sector by nearly \$80 million since 2003-04.

Young people with mental health issues have the ability to reach their full potential like other children and youth. By strengthening the community programs that support these young people, we're helping more children and youth succeed in school and become healthy, productive adults. We're also working to build a system where families can readily find the services they need, when and where they need them, without having to knock on multiple doors—a system that is inclusive, collaborative and free of the stigma, shame and blame that so often characterize mental health conditions.

The policy framework for child and youth mental health that was launched last fall will help us realize that

vision and achieve these goals. The framework is an important tool in building the integrated system we all want. It is the product of cross-sectoral collaboration with over 300 participants from a very wide range of government and community partners. The best possible child and youth mental health outcomes occur where there is collaboration and integration, not only within the formal child and youth mental health sector but also across other sectors supporting the well-being of children and youth, including schools and school boards and primary care providers.

As we look at ways to improve the current system of services, it is absolutely essential that we start with, and remain firmly focused on, the needs of the child. We are determined to achieve the best possible results for our children and youth.

A few months ago I announced the expansion of telepsychiatry, a creative solution for increasing access to mental health services for children and youth in underserved remote and rural areas and for getting them the help that they need, when they need it. As a result of this expansion, the program is providing approximately 1,400 consultations annually, province-wide.

Our government also recognizes the unique needs and challenges of aboriginal children and youth, particularly those in rural, remote and northern communities, and are working with aboriginal communities to meet those needs.

Last July I was pleased to be able to attend the ribbon-cutting for the Youth Substance Abuse Treatment Centre in the northern community of Cat Lake, serving the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. Our government provides more than \$700,000 for Tikinagan Child and Family Services to administer this eight-week treatment program for youth ages 12 to 18.

I also had the opportunity to visit the community of Big Trout Lake and saw there was a need for services there. As a result, we provided \$800,000 to support the development of a residential treatment centre for children and youth.

Our aboriginal children and youth are also benefiting from increased supports through such programs as Akwe:go, a community-based program delivered by the Federation of Indian Friendship Centres in 27 Ontario communities which provides support, tools and activities to help young people make healthy choices.

Through these initiatives and our investments in our partnerships with organizations in child and youth mental health, we are working to build a more connected and more responsive service system in communities and regions across the province. We will continue to do more to ensure that our province's most vulnerable young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our government's appreciation for the work done by the staff and volunteers of the hundreds of organizations, some of whom are represented here in the gallery today, that help children and youth with mental health conditions to achieve their very best performance.

CLIMATE CHANGE CHANGEMENT DE CLIMAT

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to tell the members of the House the progress we are making in achieving our government's ambitious environmental agenda. Climate change is the most critical environmental challenge. It's a very real threat, but I am confident that we can meet this challenge and build a stronger, cleaner, sustainable world. It comes down to everyone doing their part, a mix of willpower and innovation.

Today is a case in point. This morning I had the privilege of joining my cabinet colleagues Minister Caplan and Minister Duncan as we threw the switch to bring deep water cooling online for Queen's Park, including this historic Legislature building. This innovative technology uses water from Lake Ontario to provide a reliable, efficient and sustainable source of cooling for offices.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need to be able to hear the minister. The member for Niagara Centre will be helpful, I'm sure.

Minister.

Hon. Ms. Broten: Deep water cooling is cleaner, greener and more efficient. Not only is this a great renewable energy source that will reduce our fossil fuel consumption and lower greenhouse gas emissions; it makes good economic sense. It is estimated that using deep water cooling will save Ontario taxpayers around \$4.5 million over the next 30 years. Our government is committed to doing what needs to be done to improve the air we breathe and to fight climate change. As a green government, we're working on many fronts to make our province more sustainable, but we can't do it alone.

Nous sommes un gouvernement vert, et nous avons plusieurs projets pour rendre notre province plus viable. Mais seuls, nous ne pouvons pas accomplir tout ce qui doit être fait.

We're asking every Ontarian to make conservation a part of their lives and to reduce their environmental footprint. We're encouraging people to lower their energy consumption and switch to clean, renewable sources of power. But we're not just saying it; we're doing our part too. We are a government that leads by example. We're delivering our commitment to reduce our energy consumption by 10% this year, and we are already well on our way to making that target.

But that's not all. At our downtown office at the Ministry of the Environment building at 135 St. Clair Avenue West, we're using 100% green renewable energy. Beginning on April 1, our building switched to Bullfrog Power. Bullfrog Power is an electricity retailer which gets its power from wind and low-impact hydro generation. It's clean, renewable and it's a positive step that we can take to fight climate change and make our province greener and healthier. Last year, I made the switch to renewable energy in my own home. It's one small step but it's an important one.

Cette énergie est propre et renouvelable et nous permet de faire un pas dans la bonne direction pour lutter contre le changement climatique et rendre notre province plus verte et plus en santé.

The fact is that if each of us takes these small but important steps to reduce our environmental footprint, it's going to add up. It's going to make a big difference for our planet and for our children.

1410

Another way our government is taking the lead is cutting emissions of ozone-depleting substances by phasing out the CFCs used in older, more inefficient chillers—the large cooling systems used in office buildings and factories.

Today, I'm proud to report we've made regulatory improvements to phase out the use of CFCs. In 2012, these surplus chemicals will be designated as hazardous waste. That's a positive step forward in reducing our province's greenhouse gas emissions and it's going to promote increased energy conservation. As industry replaces old, inefficient chillers with new technology, it could mean more than 50 megawatts in energy savings across the province.

Investing in new technology and clean, renewable energy helps improve the air we breathe and helps us combat climate change. And by investing in Ontario's green industry, we support our province's future prosperity and grow tomorrow's jobs.

As more government buildings begin using greener, cleaner, renewable energy sources, I challenge other organizations and businesses to get on board and find ways to reduce their environmental footprint and be part of the culture of conservation in Ontario. It's good for our environment and it's good for the bottom line.

Toutes ces mesures comptent. Elles nous amènent dans la bonne direction. Elles nous font tous avancer dans notre lutte contre le changement climatique.

All of these steps count. They propel us forward in a positive direction. All of these steps are moving us forward in our fight against climate change. By showing real leadership, by doing what needs to be done to reduce our carbon footprint, we're helping create a healthy and sustainable environment, not just for ourselves and our communities here in Ontario but for the world our children will inherit.

GLOBAL EDGE PROGRAM

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I rise in the House today to inform members about an important new program that supports enterprising students across Ontario.

This morning, I was pleased to launch Global Edge, an exciting pilot program that gives post-secondary students international work experience, preparing them to enter an increasingly competitive and globalized economy.

Ontario youth are tomorrow's great leaders and innovators. This program gives students with an interest in business and entrepreneurship an early advantage. We

have partnered with some of the world's most successful and innovative companies to provide tremendous opportunities for 11 Ontario students.

I would like to inform the Legislature how this program came into existence. When my ministry was established, this was an idea that I wanted to explore, and I'm pleased to say that we have brought this to reality.

It is important that our future business leaders, Ontario's enterprising youth, experience what it takes to succeed in the global economy. Since I became minister, it has been my goal to provide Ontario's youth with this opportunity, to show them early on, at a critical point in their lives, what the global economy is all about so that they can get hands-on experience, both professional and business experience, from their peers right here in Ontario. I am very pleased that Global Edge provides this opportunity.

The program also showcases one of our major assets—our hard-working, skilled young workforce—to the rest of the world. Some of the most innovative and successful corporations now have the opportunity to see just how talented our young workers really are.

I would like to recognize the students who were chosen to participate in the first year of the Global Edge program, and I would like the other members of the House to join me in extending to them our welcome to this House: Sandra Cobena from Aurora, who will be working with Aecon in Ecuador; Cory Newman of Sparta, who will be working with Bombardier and travelling across America; Adrian Barber of Dundas, who will also be working with Bombardier; Kyle Fiore of Orléans, who will also be working with Bombardier in Mexico; Whitney Ersman from London, who will be working for Bank of Montreal and Harris Bank in Chicago, Illinois; Andrew Sutton of Oshawa, who will work for Cisco Systems in Ireland; Cathy Janeka of London, who will be travelling to the UK to work for ICICI Bank; Keirin Lee of Toronto, who will be working in India for Infosys; Aarti Ruparell of Mississauga, who will be working for RBC in Miami, Florida; Victoria Avila from Ottawa, who will be working for Scotiabank in Mexico; and Lucas Jewitt of Thunder Bay, who will travel to Mumbai, India, to work for State Bank of India. They will work for some of the most successful companies in the world, companies selected for their economic performance and scale of operations in the global economy.

I want to thank our partners Aecon, Bombardier, Bank of Montreal/Harris Bank, CISCO, ICICI, Infosys, RBC, State Bank of India and Scotiabank. These are the companies that are providing these youth with great opportunity to gain global experience.

Global Edge helps enterprising students develop essential business skills, which are key to their personal and career growth, and to the future of this province. Challenging placements give students first-hand experience of business on the world stage and the knowledge of what it takes to be successful in a global marketplace. We all recognize that the global economy is knowledge-based and extremely competitive. That is why this program will be invaluable to all participants.

This is just one of many initiatives taken by the McGuinty government to encourage and support our province's best and brightest minds. Our government continues its commitment to support young entrepreneurs through programs such as future entrepreneurs, Summer Company and the Ontario secondary school business plan competition.

Today's announcement shows how innovation thrives when governments, organizations and businesses work together, how we can deliver the results when we move forward together.

I am sure this will be an experience student participants will never forget. Global Edge will provide these students with the experience of their lifetime.

I want to thank the students again and also the firms that are participating in this program for coming here this afternoon and joining us in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): Yesterday marked the beginning of Children's Mental Health Week, and on behalf of John Tory and the Progressive Conservative caucus, I want not only to acknowledge Children's Mental Health Week but also to thank the thousands of parents and professionals who work in the children's mental health sector and who are working hard to protect these vulnerable children. I'd like to draw particular attention to those in the gallery today who are service providers and who have joined us for a lobby day at Queen's Park. So thank you very much.

Presently, one in five children are living with mental illnesses in this province, and that is 20% of our children and youth population. But while the dedicated employees in the children's mental health sector are continuing to pour their hearts into their work in order to ensure these children are getting the treatment they need and the care they deserve, there is more that can be done for this sector. Throughout Ontario, children's mental health networks are suffering from fragmented funding and wage disparity, causing high turnover and stigma. They need more than one-off funding announcements—they need far more.

To fully address the gap in services and treatment for 20% of our children and youth population, the McGuinty Liberals should be taking a holistic approach to in some places enhance and in other places fix children's mental health services. This means that the McGuinty government should not only be looking at funding announcements but also at developing, adopting and implementing an overall children's mental health strategy by giving clear authority to the minister and by breaking down the ministerial silos of this government.

One in five children in this province suffer from mental illness. We need to start thinking outside the box so these kids don't feel like they're stuck in one.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to respond to the statement by the Minister of the Environment, but what this announcement really is is just another Liberal re-announcement. Another day, another photo opportunity.

We're pleased that after four years of inaction, the McGuinty Liberals have finally decided to adopt the policy ideas set forth by our leader, John Tory, who has clearly said that government needs to lead by example. Well, what do you know, this morning the Minister of the Environment told the people of Ontario that the government should be leading by example to clean up Ontario's air. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

But let's be clear. We all remember in 2003 when Dalton McGuinty stood on stage, waved that big, red book of broken promises and told the people of Ontario that he would lead by example by closing the coal plants in 2007. It was Dalton McGuinty himself who stated that he would clean up the dirty air that contributes to 1,800 premature deaths and \$1 billion in health care costs. So far, the McGuinty government's idea of leading by example is to break this ill-advised coal-closing promise not once, but over and over again.

1420

The coal plants Dalton McGuinty promised to close are still spewing the same dirty air that he promised to clean up. The new technologies that could help us make a real difference in the quality of the air we breathe remain a prisoner of Dalton McGuinty's coal fiction. John Tory and the PC caucus fully support the goal of reducing energy consumption and the government's taking the lead to fight for climate change in Ontario. We presented a comprehensive plan with real action and real targets, but in four years, Dalton McGuinty has not presented a climate change plan—no targets, no vision. What Dalton McGuinty does have is scandals of Gomery proportions and a refusal to be straight with Ontarians.

GLOBAL EDGE PROGRAM

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I'm responding to the statement by the Minister for Small Business. I'm reluctant to respond to anything this minister says, because we on the this side of the House don't believe he should be sitting on the executive council. He's the first member of this Legislature to be officially reprimanded by the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario for breaching the Members' Integrity Act. The Integrity Commissioner said that this minister was "egregiously reckless," and to make it even worse, he did this in his capacity as a minister.

The Integrity Commissioner left it up to the Premier to mete out discipline, and we've seen how the Premier of the day metes out discipline in terms of allegations and substantiated allegations against ministers in his government. We saw it with Minister Caplan and the OLG scan-

dal. We're seeing it on a day-to-day basis with Minister Colle and the slush fund scandal, where the Premier refuses to act—even to call in the Auditor General. He allows this minister, who was the first member of this Legislature to be officially reprimanded for breaching the Members' Integrity Act, to continue to sit on the executive council. Shameful.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Order.

Responses?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I'm responding to a statement by the Minister for Small Business. First of all, congratulations to the successful applicants. But clearly, just as in the case with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, there was no transparent accessibility to this fund. There are thousands of young people eminently qualified for this program, and yet no members on this side of the House were even alerted of its existence. Could the minister immediately submit the criteria, the process for selection, any political connections and when the notifications for this program went out, or do we need to call in the Auditor General on another ministry just so that all young people are made eligible for this program? On the heels of the slush fund, this is shocking and completely unfair to all those young people who had no chance to even apply.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I always find it extraordinary to hear this government talk about action on climate change. The minister declares that the government is reducing its energy use by 10%. It's interesting that this is a government that has very little understanding of energy or the issues before it, but certainly this is not a government that has a commitment to the reduction of energy use by 10%. If the minister talked about electricity, then one might look at their record. But in fact, this government recently replied to a question that I posed during estimates—

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): What about your record, Peter? You're in favour of higher electricity prices for consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Minister of Health will come to order.

Mr. Tabuns: I think he just feels bad about his bad press recently. In any event, on April 19, I received a letter from the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—I had asked in estimates what the targets were for public infrastructure renewal—the non-electrical energy targets, the reduction targets for Ontario operations. He wrote back that there are no non-electrical energy reduction targets assigned to public infrastructure renewal or the Ontario Realty Corp.—none, zero, rien.

This is an area where government doesn't set targets, doesn't act, speaks as virtuously as it possibly can, and

then on a day when the Globe and Mail reports that eight new nuclear reactor proposals are on the table, that same day we get the sugar-coating. We get the announcement of tremendous virtue on the part of the government because it has to cover over the fact that this is the most pro-nuclear government Ontario has ever seen.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of New Democrats, I want to welcome the representatives from Children's Mental Health Ontario to Queen's Park today. I had the opportunity of popping into the open house earlier today and I appreciated what you had to say.

I want to thank volunteers on the agency boards, because many of you are busier now than you were when you worked full-time for paid work in the workforce. I also want to thank the many professionals and staff who go far beyond the call of duty, and certainly beyond the pay they are provided, to work with adolescents and youth who suffer from anxiety, depression, who have behavioural disorders or who contemplate or have tried suicide. We owe all of you a great debt of gratitude for the work you do to give every child and every adolescent the chance to be as safe, happy and healthy as he or she can be.

But the crux of the matter is this: In Ontario, one in five children suffer from mental illness, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth, and in Ontario only one in six kids who need help actually gets it. At the moment you only get access to care if you have extreme needs. That's why Children's Mental Health Ontario asked for \$40 million of new funding in its pre-budget submission, and they didn't get anywhere near \$40 million, did they? They got an increase to base funding that amounts to about 5%. What does that mean? Well, it kept the wolves from the doors of those agencies where people were literally getting layoff notices. It will allow some agencies to flow a very modest pay increase to staff who deserve so much more. It did not and it will not make any significant dent at all in the huge waiting lists for mental health services, for diagnosis and treatment for children and adolescents and the families and friends who support them. And it certainly will not allow for the creation of new programs to deal with mounting service needs, and that is a disaster for children who suffer from mental health illness in this province.

We need government to get serious about making investments in children's mental health here in Ontario. Maybe when government gets serious about making those investments, the stigma and shame that are attached to children's mental health will be eliminated or reduced.

It is also going to be a pleasure for my colleague Ms. Horwath to introduce a private member's bill next week to designate the first full week in May every year as Children's Mental Health Week to keep this issue—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm sure all the members of the House would want to welcome the members of OUSA, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, who are here in the Legislature today to watch the proceedings.

BERTHA WILSON

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the passing of former Justice Bertha Wilson.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): It's with great sadness that I rise today in the House to mark the passing of one of our greatest Canadians, one of the most distinguished judges of Ontario and Canada and indeed the world, the Honourable Madam Justice Bertha Wilson.

En raison de ses multiples accomplissements, il s'est avéré difficile de résumer ses exceptionnelles contributions à notre pays dans le temps qui nous est alloué aujourd'hui.

Before Bertha Wilson, and for much of our history, having nine male judges on the nine-member Supreme Court of Canada was a given. Now it is quite possible to imagine the heretofore unimaginable: a Supreme Court of Canada whose nine members are all the best judges in the land, and all happen to be women. An all-female Supreme Court of Canada? Why not? Why not, indeed? Ask Bertha Wilson.

1430

She was born in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, on September 18, 1923, received her master of arts degree from the University of Aberdeen in 1944 and then came in Canada to study law at Dalhousie University. At the time, the dean of Dalhousie's law school encouraged her to "go home and take up crocheting." To "go home and take up crocheting," that's what he said. "No thanks," she said. She went on to receive her bachelor of law degree, and in the 1957, she was called to the Nova Scotia bar.

As evidenced by the dean's comment, the legal profession of that era was dominated largely by men, a fact not lost on Bertha Wilson. Despite this state of affairs, she began a very prosperous career at the Toronto law firm of Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt. She was the first female lawyer to be hired by that firm, and she became the first female partner at that firm.

Sixteen years later, she blazed yet another new trail by becoming the first woman to be appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal. It was a very proud day for her province and for her country. Justice Wilson flourished in her new role. She made a number of groundbreaking rulings during her seven years on the court.

Twenty-five years ago from this year, as the charter was born in 1982, she continued her pioneering ways by becoming the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada—the same year the Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into force. Her appointment by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau literally and figuratively shook up the Supreme Court.

She was the first woman in the 107-year history of the court to serve as a judge and a colleague. This had profound as well as mundane effects. On the mundane side, they had to build a women's washroom on the judge's floor because there was none before Justice Wilson. More importantly, she brought a sense of humanity to the court as an institution.

With the charter, the court was suddenly thrust into the nation's spotlight. The charter promised equality to all Canadians, male and female. Her appointment was an important part of the fulfillment of that promise. But please don't imagine that it was a symbolic moment only. Professor Jamie Cameron of Osgoode Hall Law School remarked that Justice Wilson was "a vital part of that early burst of judicial energy and creativity that really characterized those early years of charter interpretation."

These early years are sometimes referred to as the Dickson-Wilson court. It marked the most activist and progressive era of Canada's jurisprudence, and it was very much thanks to her.

Like the charter itself, she ushered in a new era of public law. She presided over landmark cases like *Singh*, which held that refugee claimants must have an oral hearing, revolutionizing the way a refugee claim is determined; *Andrews v. the Law Society of British Columbia*, the first Supreme Court case dealing with equality rights under the charter; *Lavalée*, which considered self-defence from a battered women's perspective; and *Morgentaler*, which struck down Canada's ban on abortion. These landmark cases were not only unique because of their subject matter but also because they were some of the first cases to interpret the charter.

She retired from the court in 1991, was made a Companion of the Order of Canada and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Not one to rest on her laurels, in 1993, she continued her advocacy on behalf of women by penning the landmark report *Touchstones for Change* as chair of the Canadian Bar Association's task force on gender equality in the legal profession.

So where are we now? Where once Bertha Wilson was the sole female judge on the Court of Appeal for Ontario, today women account for one out of four members of that bench. Where once she was the only female member of the Supreme Court, women now make up four of its nine judges. Here in Ontario, women account for 53% of those called to bar last year. Just last week, the first female Chief Justice on the Ontario Court of Justice, Annemarie Bonkalo, took her post.

It all started with a brave woman who said "no thanks" to an insult from a law dean and "yes" to a heroic career in law and justice. We have a long way to go, and I'm sure she would not want any self-congratulations by

anyone, but we can give thanks. She was a hero to men and women, to the disenfranchised, to the discriminated, to the unsung and to the vulnerable.

On behalf of the Premier and the government of Ontario, I offer my most sincere condolences to friends and family of the Honourable Bertha Wilson and the thanks of a grateful province.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm very honoured to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and join with my colleagues from all sides of this House to honour a woman to whom we all owe a significant debt of gratitude for having the courage to forge a path for women's equality in the legal profession and in the administration of justice in our country.

Justice Wilson began her formal education in her native Scotland, earning a master's degree from the University of Aberdeen in 1944. Years later, she found herself at the gates of the law school at Dalhousie University seeking admission to the bachelor of laws program. After many attempts to dissuade her, including advice to "go home and take up crocheting," as they had "no room for dilettantes," she ultimately prevailed and thus began what would become an exemplary legal career.

In addition to completing her LLB at Dalhousie in 1957, throughout her life she was also awarded honorary degrees from scores of institutions spanning the country, as well as several international institutions.

Justice Wilson was called to the Nova Scotia bar in 1957. After two years, she moved to Ontario and joined the firm of Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt. By 1968, she made partner, becoming the first woman appointed a partner in a major Canadian law firm. It was not long after that she continued to make history, this time as the first woman appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal—in fact, the first woman to be appointed to any appellate court in Canada—in 1975. She built upon this historic achievement in 1982, the same year that saw the enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as she was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada by then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, becoming the first woman to become a Supreme Court justice.

Widely characterized as controversial though fair, I wondered how she saw, if any, her role in history. Perhaps her reputation and drive to speak out often on behalf of minorities was shaped by a responsibility she felt as a woman, or perhaps the reverse: that she was ascribed the title of "activist and feminist" simply because she was female. I therefore read with interest, in Ellen Anderson's biography of Bertha Wilson, a speech delivered by the justice in 1990 at Osgoode Hall Law School entitled, "Will women judges really make a difference?" Anderson writes that Justice Wilson's speech was met with significant controversy amid charges that the sheer insinuation that it might not be possible to achieve judicial neutrality represented an abdication of the oath of her office and painted her as a feminist, though, as I learned, she never considered herself to be one.

In this speech, she reflects, "When I was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada in the spring of 1982, a

great many women from all across the country telephoned, cabled or wrote to me rejoicing in my appointment.... So why was I not rejoicing? Why did I not share the tremendous confidence of these women? First came the realization that no one could live up to the expectations of my well-wishers. I had the sense of being doomed to failure, not because of any excess of humility on my part or any desire to shirk the responsibility of the office, but because I knew from hard experience that the law does not work that way. Change in the law comes slowly and incrementally; that is its nature."

But change things she would. Though symbolic of her humility, it is almost ironic that these comments came amidst a time of significant legal developments in Canadian history. Justice Wilson was, of course, one of the pioneers shaping the effect the charter would have on individual and collective rights and freedoms in Canada and, therefore, has left an indelible mark on our society. Her drive to apply the charter rigorously and broadly made her famous for her thoughtful rulings. As she described the charter, "it had put law into the kind of perspective in which I have always seen it—as large as life itself—not a narrow legalistic discipline in which inflexible rules are applied regardless of the justice of the result, but a set of values that we, as a civilized and cultured people, endorse as the right of all our citizens."

Today, as we recognize her outstanding contributions to society here in this House, the family, friends and colleagues of Justice Bertha Wilson are gathered in our nation's capital to pay tribute to her remarkable life. Justice Wilson is survived by her husband of 61 years, John Wilson, as well as by a brother, James. I would ask all members of this House to join me in offering our sympathies and condolences for her loved ones, as well as to reflect on the integral role she has played in the evolution of our justice system in Canada.

1440

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of New Democrats, it's a privilege for me to make these comments to mark the passing of Justice Bertha Wilson.

According to her biography, when Justice Bertha Wilson applied to study law at Dalhousie University in 1955, she actually wasn't interested in practising law; rather, she viewed law as an area for intellectual development. She thought that knowledge of the law could not but be useful to her, and she wanted very much to be able to help her Presbyterian minister husband's parishioners with their legal problems. In light of this, it's with a certain amount of humour, but still with the greatest respect, that we are here today to acknowledge a woman who became the first female Supreme Court justice in Canada and who blazed a trail for women's involvement in the legal profession in this country.

I think that if any one term were to describe Justice Wilson's contribution to the legal profession, to the role of women and to our Canadian political and legal legacy, it would have to be "trailblazer." At a time when women were supposed to support their husbands' careers, at a time when a law school dean could tell her that she

wasn't suited for the law and should "go home and take up crocheting," Bertha Wilson took one of the toughest careers and made it her own as a woman in what was then a man's world, and she didn't let those very early challenges deter her or put her off in any way.

When we talk about Justice Wilson, we talk about firsts. She was the first female lawyer hired by the Toronto firm of Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt. She turned a temporary position as a junior lawyer with the firm into a successful career, culminating when she was named the firm's first female partner. When she was appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal in 1975, she was, of course, the first woman appointed to that court. And we all know that she was the first woman appointed as a Supreme Court justice in 1982.

It's not just for these firsts, however, that she is known. Justice Bertha Wilson made a name for herself in the legal profession for the many important judgements she was involved in and for her constant desire and support for the evolution of legal and social norms in our country. When she was first appointed to the Supreme Court, she was heavily involved in the legal questions around patriation of the Canadian constitution. Over the next decade, she continued to be involved in landmark judgements that have come to characterize Canadian society, continuing her previous important work on the Ontario Court of Appeal.

Justice Wilson wrote important decisions on any number of cases, many of which impacted the role and position of women in Canadian society. As a Court of Appeal justice, she wrote a historic decision guaranteeing the rights of women in common law relationships. As a Supreme Court justice, she wrote the majority decision striking down the section of the Criminal Code that dealt with abortion in the landmark *R. v. Morgentaler* in 1988.

Ironically, it was for her work after her retirement from the Supreme Court in 1991 that Justice Wilson most wanted to be remembered. It was her post-appointment work as the commissioner for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which called for a complete revolution in the relationship between First Nations and the federal government, that she felt had the greatest impact on Canadian society.

Today it is with sadness that we mark her passing, but it is also with extreme gratitude that we remember her life and her accomplishments.

VISITORS

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome to the House this afternoon a group of young people from my riding. They are students at Weston Collegiate Institute. I'd ask all members to welcome them.

Failure of sound system.

The House recessed from 1445 to 1502.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg leave of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 30(b), we complete the allotted time for question period and

petitions such that the time not go beyond 5 p.m. Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I got a note: They found the government House leader's nail scissors up there. If he wants to pick them up later, he can. Just kidding.

My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and it concerns the political slush fund. The stench of this scandal continues to grow. On Saturday we learned about a senior staffer in the minister's own office with ties to one of the groups that received a quarter of a million dollars out of this fund. Today we learned about a former policy adviser to the Minister of Health who sits on the board of the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre, the Liberal-dominated group that received \$200,000 after being registered as an animal welfare charity only three weeks earlier. The web is catching more and more people with direct ties to the McGuinty government.

Early this afternoon a letter was delivered to the Auditor General signed by each and every member of the Progressive Conservative and NDP caucuses, asking him to use his authority to investigate the slush fund. Will the minister support that call and ask the Auditor General to investigate this slush fund?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First of all, I want to correct the record. The Leader of the Opposition keeps referring to the young intern in my office as a senior staffer. He was an intern who came into my office, a foreign-trained professional. That's what he was: an intern who had no say in funding decisions.

The Provincial Auditor has the authority to look at all ministries—he can do that. We've given him the extended power to look at all ministries. He can do that, based on the extended powers that we've given him.

Mr. Tory: The gentleman in question, by the way, is a policy adviser in the minister's office. But having said that, the minister could stand up in his place right now and cut a lot of this very short by saying that he would agree, because he wants to clear his own name, clear the government's name, clear the names of some of these groups that have gotten tied up in this, by having the auditor investigate. You could get up right now and make it happen in two seconds. I don't know why you don't do that.

It's not just us who are calling for this information; it's more than a dozen newspapers across the province that are seeing the ties to the Liberal Party, including at least two ties to two ministers' office. The Toronto Star, Ottawa Citizen, Guelph Mercury, Globe and Mail, Barrie Examiner, North Bay Nugget, Dunnville Chronicle,

Peterborough Examiner, Kingston Whig-Standard, National Post, Chatham Daily News, Kitchener-Waterloo Record, Hamilton Spectator and the Brantford Expositor have all run columns or editorials saying that this is an Adscam-type slush fund and it needs to be investigated. The time to call in the Auditor General is now. I ask the minister: Will you call him in? Can you stand in your place right now and get him in here to report before September 10?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We are very proud of the investments we have made with our community partners, whether it be the Afghan women's counselling and integration services, the Ireland Park Foundation or the Korean Canadian Women's Association. These are the partners we have made investments with because they were much needed, based on providing more services for newcomers and supporting volunteerism. Those are the principles we made those investments on. We are proud of those groups and we stand with those groups and those investments.

Mr. Tory: The minister just doesn't understand that only if someone independent takes a look at all of these things will we be able to determine—if the minister believes so strongly that what he's saying is correct, then why wouldn't the minister refer this to the Auditor General for investigation?

India Abroad, last Friday in a story headlined "Grants put Immigration Minister in a Bind," says that the minister gave a quarter of a million dollars to the Bengali Cultural Society after a meeting arranged by former Liberal cabinet minister Maria Minna. The minister's defence was that they were partnered with COSTI, but India Abroad says that the minister "gave a lengthy explanation about how money was given to the Bengali organization, but was unwilling to disclose whether the cheque was issued in the name of COSTI or to the Bengali Cultural Society."

It's the failure to answer these simple questions that begs for a review by the Auditor General. Why, before there's another revelation, will the minister not refer this matter to the Auditor General? Do you have something to hide? Why don't you refer it?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Many of these organizations, like the one he mentioned, COSTI, have been around for over 50 years, doing exceptional work all across the GTA, serving immigrants, teaching English as a second language, job-training workshops. These are the organizations that we partnered with to provide services in areas where there haven't been enough services to ensure that newcomers get a job, feel integrated and feel welcome in this province, unlike the previous government. The first thing they did was to close down all of Ontario's Welcome Houses.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question?

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. On Saturday we heard about the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada, a reputable organization, which received \$250,000 from

the minister's slush fund. But we also heard how the minister had on staff in his office a member of the board of directors of this organization. The minister claims he was an intern and therefore everything is okay, that this is just a simple coincidence. This issue is all about the appearance of a possible conflict of interest. That's what it's about.

Here is what the National Post wrote this morning: "With memories of Adscam still fresh, this all sounds too familiar for voters' liking. If Mr. McGuinty wants to maintain his reputation as an honest Premier, he must call in the auditor now and clear up the allegations against his government before October's election. Otherwise, voters may simply assume the worst."

Why won't the minister do the right thing: Call the auditor in, allow him to investigate this, clear the air, clear your name? Why are you not doing that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, this ministry is proud to partner with organizations like the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada. They, since 1993, have helped over 12,000 newcomers get jobs, learn English; they have been mentoring with business. They are an outstanding organization that's got an incredible track record.

The intern in my office was a volunteer member of that great organization. He came into my office as an intern. He then resigned from that board. He is a great asset to my office because he's a newcomer who had the trials and tribulations, with high qualifications, of trying to get a job. He worked as a volunteer with many organizations, along with CPAC.

Mr. Torgy: You see, if there's no problem at all with that grant, then I don't know why the minister wouldn't want the auditor to have a look at it and tell us all that there's no problem with it. We'd all be very happy to hear that.

1510

Yesterday, we heard about the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, which is concerned about the process by which this slush fund money was paid out. I have here today a letter from the Chinese Community Centre of Ontario. They've been trying for years to get funding for some of their programs and they've been denied through all the traditional sources, like the Trillium fund.

Here is another of the key points: Some groups knew about the slush fund and others didn't. The minister kept a list, the Liberal caucus was informed, and people could make an application or tell people about this. You had a list—the minister did—of winners and losers, without any kind of formal criteria or application process whatsoever, just you making your picks. That is why we need the auditor to review this, and every single member of the PC Party and the NDP agree. My question is this: Why won't the minister do the honourable thing and call the auditor in now to get to the bottom of this? Why won't you do it?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member knows full well that the Office of the Auditor General can look at any ministry and has the right to look at all of our books; he can do that.

I just want to say to the member opposite that the investments we've made in all newcomer agencies, especially in the Chinese community, where there's a growing number of newcomers coming into Ontario—we have made excellent investments in the TCCSA, Chinese information and community services, CPAC. These are organizations that are overwhelmed with the great number of newcomers looking for help. They are doing a great job.

Most newcomers who come here are doing wonderful things, but there's a number who are falling through the cracks. It is not right that 60% of the persons going to the Daily Bread Food Bank here in Toronto are immigrants. They're crying out for help—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Torgy: All we're asking the minister to do is to provide an accounting for that money and every other penny of taxpayers' money for which you have responsibility. That's all.

Here's what the Toronto Star said on April 26: "This ad hoc distribution of tax dollars is inexcusable. Taxpayers deserve a complete and immediate accounting of how their money has been used."

Here's what the Ottawa Citizen said on the April 27: "As any federal bureaucrat who has even a remote acquaintance with scandal during the Chrétien-Martin years can testify, a program that hands out public money at the end of a fiscal year, absent a proper application process and routine oversight, is ripe for abuse. The Ontario Liberals appear not to have learned this lesson."

And the Globe and Mail, on May 3: "It does not take a bloodhound to detect the whiff of a slush fund, and to wonder whether the Liberals are making such free use of public money to suit their own electoral ambitions..."

Why won't the minister heed the call of all of the opposition members of this House and call the auditor in to clear the air and show taxpayers that their money has been properly handled? If that's what you did—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Many organizations, big and small—
Laughter.

Hon. Mr. Colle: I know the members opposite laugh—have been asking for help from government. They have been asking for help. Many of them with language barriers haven't been able to articulate that sometimes. These organizations that we have partnered with have given them a voice. They had not been listened to for many years. So what's happened is that as a result of our struggle to try and get federal funding, which we got—as a result of those new investments that the federal government is finally making in Ontario, they're being served better.

We also find that some of these organizations have never had any resources to build new centres or renovate. We've helped to—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My question is this: In connection with the

McGuinty government slush fund, has the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration at any time offered his resignation to the Premier?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've said it repeatedly that there is a great deal of work to be done, and I have been doing that work.

Laughter.

Hon. Mr. Colle: I know the members opposite are still laughing at that. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it has been my complete focus since I have been minister, before I was minister, even before I was elected, to try and help people in Ontario who need help.

Mr. Hampton: Gee, I thought it was a very straightforward, specific and simple question. I'll ask it again: In connection with the McGuinty government's slush fund, has the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration at any time offered his resignation to the Premier? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, as I reiterated, I am committed to continue and totally focused on doing a job that has to be done. I have been determined and continue to be determined to do that all the time. The leader of the third party is the one who still has not apologized for calling long-standing organizations, for the most part run by hard-working community groups—outstanding organizations across this province, whether it be CultureLink or AWIC or the United Jewish Appeal—he has called them all fly-by-nights. I challenge him to withdraw that “fly-by-night”

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, not once have you provided a direct answer to the questions that have been put to you regarding the McGuinty government slush fund, and this question, it would appear I think to most reasonable people, is the most specific, the most clear question: Have you, in connection with the McGuinty government slush fund, at any time offered your resignation, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to the Premier? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, that member has been asked to apologize about calling these great organizations fly-by-nights. He still refuses to do that. I've said very clearly, and I'll say it again, I have been committed to doing everything I can to help newcomers and I will continue to do that. I have always said I will, and I always will, continue to make that commitment, whether it was yesterday, a year or two years ago. I have always said I'm going to continue to work, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to do the much-needed work that was ignored for too long.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, let me ask the minister this: You've been around this Legislature for a while. As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, does the minister think it's appropriate for a government to send \$30 million of

public money out the door with no announcement that there's even a program that groups can apply to, with no formal application process, with no criteria to assess what groups or organizations should get money, with no follow-up rules or regulations to determine whether or not the money has been spent appropriately and no evaluation or audit? Does the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration consider it proper, transparent and accountable for the government to put money out the door that way?

1520

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I've said before, my ministry's principles of investment are based on ensuring that integration and diversity are enhanced, that volunteerism and participation opportunities are increased, and that we support community building, whether it be in social services or settlement services. Those are the principles our investments have been based on, and they are sound principles. We are honoured, as the ministry, to partner with organizations that we've had long-standing relationships with that are doing great things and continue to do great things, whether they be small ones like AWIC in Don Mills or whether they be large ones or emerging ones like the Somali Midaynta Community Services who need more capacity. That's what we're—

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: Suddenly the minister has started to refer to principles. Could the minister table any documents that state these principles in connection with the \$30 million that went out the door? Can the minister table any documents that show that these principles were stated or pertain to \$30 million that went out the door?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The investments we've made, again, went to very deserving organizations, big and small: the Catholic Immigration Centre in Ottawa, Catholic Community Services of York Region, the Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines, which has been doing great work.

The investments we made are on our website, with the name of the organization and the amount. Also, there's now an improved process, a registry so we can track all the demands out there, because for too many years there was no investment in capacity building, no investments in renovations or in establishing new centres. We now have an improved process that is a better one. There's much more work to do.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I think every member of this Legislature can probably cite from their own constituencies 20 or 30 organizations that do good work in the community and probably need funding, but in virtually every case, most of these organizations were never told by the McGuinty government that there was any program, that there was any money available. Some of them, when they did put in proposals, were told, like the Hindu temple in Hamilton was told, “Oh, there's no money.” Four times they were told.

Minister, that is why members of the opposition believe that the Auditor General needs to examine what happened here: no rules, no application process, no announcement, no follow-up evaluation or auditing, and yet \$30 million went out door.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr. Hampton: My question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is: Will the minister call in the Auditor General to do an immediate investigation and report on the \$30 million that went out the door—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I've told the member, if you look at the organizations across the board, they are organizations that are helping newcomers—settlement, language training, job training—some are involved with food banks, some are involved with the cultural and heritage aspects of our great province. Those are organizations that have great track records. There are also organizations that are emerging, where we wanted to build more capacity based on enhancing diversity, expanding volunteerism, ensuring our heritage is respected and building better communities, socially and physically. Those are the investments we made, and that is the return the people of Ontario will get for years to come because these organizations are trying to contribute to Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration regarding his Liberal slush fund: Yesterday the minister again dodged questions related to a senior staffer in his office who was a prominent and long-time member of a board of directors that received a whopping \$250,000 out of the slush fund.

Today we hear about another wild coincidence, about a senior staffer in the office of the Minister of Health who sits on another board that received another whopping \$200,000 slush fund grant under very suspicious circumstances. Aren't these rather happy coincidences for the Ontario Liberal Party and for Liberal cabinet ministers and their staff? Isn't this an extraordinary run of serendipity for the friends of Dalton? Minister, do you truly believe that taxpayers and members of the assembly are that gullible?

Hon. Mr. Colle: If you look at these organizations all across Ontario, we fund over 80 settlement services, and they're made up of members, volunteers, of all three parties.

The member opposite continues to not correct himself in that Michael Huang came into my office as an intern. He was a foreign-trained professional who was under-employed, who was doing great community work, who had walked in the shoes of the unemployed newcomer, who has master's degrees from the University of Beijing, who has post-master's degrees here in Ontario. He's out of work, yet he was volunteering. I was proud to have him come into my office and get his direct expertise on what we should do in helping newcomers because he has been there and he was willing to co-operate in sharing these experiences.

Mr. Hudak: If an intern can accomplish a whopping \$250,000 grant from the Liberal Party slush fund, imagine what your senior policy advisers are accomplishing for Liberal Party-connected groups. Legitimate

groups, Minister, working hard in Niagara, like Casa El Norte, the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre and Bled Hall in Beamsville, Ontario, didn't receive dime one from this fund. They didn't even know it existed. But you see that the Liberal Party candidate attached to a group goes to the front of the line. You see a group that has a Liberal Party staffer in the minister's office—they go to the front of the line. Or a board of directors that has seven out of seven who are senior donors to the Ontario Liberal Party. Ted Williams couldn't hit that kind of average on his best day—seven out of seven. Minister, it's clear that it's not what you do, it's who you knew in the Ontario Liberal Party. Isn't it time that this minister tendered his resignation immediately?

Hon. Mr. Colle: All across Ontario, there's an incredible number of groups that we have partnered with through various programs. In the Niagara region itself, we've developed a partnership with many of the service providers that created an immigrant gateway in the Niagara region. They come from all walks of life—the chamber of commerce—coming from the region of Niagara. In fact, that's what led that initiative in Niagara region, the members of the Niagara regional council who said, "We need to have more settlement services in Niagara." We've done that because the need was there.

The member opposite can cherry-pick his partisan—can go all over the place. The main thing is, we know that all of these organizations have representations from all different walks of life.

We have more work to do, but the good news is, there are more resources, especially since we also got federal investment now going to groups and to programs across Ontario that never existed before.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Today, every single member on this side of the House came together to ask the Auditor General to immediately undertake an audit of all the slush funds handed out over the last two years. We had to take this extraordinary step because the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration would not do what he is required to do by his oath of office.

The Minister of Citizenship has made a mockery of this Legislature with his inability to explain the process for handing out millions of public—very public—dollars. My question to minister is as follows: We want to know if the minister has offered his resignation, and if he has not, why not?

1530

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, to the member opposite, there are incredible demands and needs that we all know exist in Ontario. They may also exist on the infrastructure side and on the health care side, but there have been an incredible number of needs integrating newcomers across this province, investing in our volunteers and investing in communities. We've tried to do that because, as I said,

for a number of years there was no availability. We've tried to do that.

It's a big first step we've taken. We're going to make the process even better, because we know there are even more needs to be met. That's what we've tried to do, and as I said, we are committed to continuing to do that because there are many, many worthy organizations that still need our partnership.

Mr. Prue: In the past four weeks I think the Minister of Citizenship has done himself and his party a disservice in this House. Allow me to quote what Oliver Cromwell said in the House at Westminster in 1653, which I think is just as applicable to this minister today: "You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing.... Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God—go!"

Will the minister heed these words and before this assembly tender his—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: I don't know whether you heard the question, Mr. Speaker. Again I will ask the question, through you, to the minister: Will the minister heed these words and before this assembly, if not to the Premier himself, tender his resignation?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I have been most moved by the incredible courage of newcomers and the organizations that help newcomers across this province. I've been in the community halls, I've been in the mosques, I've been in the gurdwaras in the Sikh communities. I've seen the incredible courage, dedication and generosity of these newcomers.

I've also seen the desperation, where you've got people with PhDs who for 10 years haven't been able to work at anything over \$15,000 a year. That's why we've moved aggressively on Bill 124. That's why we've given them more language training. That's what we've done and that's why we've made these investments, so that these organizations can help not only the ones who are in desperate need but the ones who are almost succeeding.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I really don't need any more assistance from the government House leader.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. I know that your ministry is committed to protecting and managing our province's endangered species. My question is specifically focused on the endangered species legislation that the minister recently introduced. I believe that this legislation will make Ontario the North American leader in species-at-risk protection and recovery, compared to the Tory legacy, which, according to the 2002 auditor's report, "left threatened animals and plants at risk of extinction due to the lack of an overall strategy for protecting endangered species."

I've read the legislation, and I particularly noticed the stewardship and flexible tools proposed in it. I believe this will go a long way to ensuring the social and economic well-being of the province.

Minister, can you please tell this House why Bill 184 is so important to protect species at risk and the implications for our endangered species of some individuals clear-cutting trees?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I very much appreciate the question from the member for Peterborough, who I know has great regard for the environment and is a strong supporter of this particular act.

I must say, as a former farmer and rural landowner myself, that I was quite shocked by the wanton destruction that happened yesterday in eastern Ontario by the landowners' organization that Randy Hillier was the founder of. I have to wonder why the leader of the opposition doesn't disavow himself from that sort of action. I'm sure he wouldn't want to be associated with that. What's interesting is that the farmers of Ontario and rural landowners are the original stewards of our land in this province. They take great pride in their land and their ownership and want to do the right thing and protect the environment. In fact, a proof of that is the oversubscription of all of our stewardship programs that we have, and that's why the McGuinty government has committed an extra \$18 million for our rural stewardship programs.

Mr. Leal: Thank you, Minister, for enlightening this House and, more importantly, providing us with up-to-date legislation. I've paid close attention to this legislation. I've noticed that renowned groups such as the David Suzuki Foundation, the Environmental Defence, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the World Wildlife Federation of Canada have all shown great support for this legislation.

The minister's response to my question has brought up the concept of consultation. I believe this is an important component when introducing such innovative legislation. Many groups have raised concerns about the consultation process. I know that the people of Ontario support this legislation. I know that farmers and rural Ontarians are great stewards of the land. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, I think it's important that the minister sets the record straight. Will he please share with all members of this House how the consultation process unfolded? And could he also tell us what extensive consultation process took place before bringing this legislation forward to this House?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Since May 2006, members of our staff throughout the Ministry of Natural Resources have met with stakeholder organizations throughout the province, and all the main industrial and commercial groups have been consulted. We've had a series of aboriginal consultations throughout northern Ontario. I have been out and had meetings in Bruce county, in Dryden and in Thunder Bay. My officials continue to do that. As of noon today, all the amendments were brought forward. I believe the opposition brought forward 10. We brought

forward about 45. We look forward to coming back to committee tomorrow and having clause-by-clause debate on those amendments.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration regarding his political slush fund. In addition to Michael Huang, the policy adviser in the minister's office whose group received \$250,000 out of this slush fund, today we read in the Toronto Star that yet another Liberal connection has been made between the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre and this government. Sadly, a former staffer in the Minister of Health's own office sits on the board of that organization. Meanwhile, the Ottawa Chabad centre and the South Nepean Muslim Community Centre have been left out. They've received nothing.

So the minister has overseen and administered a political scandal which is now getting closer and closer to this Liberal government. My question, Mr. Speaker, through you: Did the minister do the honourable thing and offer his resignation to the Premier?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): As I said, there's an interesting amount of selective cherry-picking on who belongs to which party or which office. There are people all across Ontario working in these community groups or organizations from all parties. But I do want to say that the investment we made with the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada is an investment we're proud of because they are volunteers. Over 20,000 members have been working since 1993 on a volunteer basis, getting newcomers jobs, literally holding the hands of newcomers who are desperate because they can't pay the rent or put food on the table. Many of them, because of that assistance from these organizations, have gotten jobs and hope. The government is trying to increase the capacity to offer more opportunity because every year 140,000 newcomers come to Ontario. That's the investment we're making.

Ms. MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, he missed the point. Quite honestly, if he wants to start talking about Chinese Canadian communities, he forgot to mention the one in my riding that had no knowledge of the process whatsoever, the Agape Chinese Alliance.

He can also stay away from his speaking points and start answering questions in this place. I asked him a very simple question. It required a Yes or No answer. I'll ask him again, Mr. Speaker, through you—

Interjections.

1540

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear the member.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. This is not helpful. The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. MacLeod: I guess they were over there reading their copy of the Gomery report to see how they can do

this again. But, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the question one more time, through you. I know you can't hear me right now, but has the minister offered his resignation to the Premier? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I really appreciate this opportunity to talk about the investments that we've made in Ottawa. We have invested in the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre. We're proud of the investment we made in the Catholic Immigration Centre in Ottawa of about \$100,000. We're proud of the fact that we've made Ottawa an immigrant gateway. We've given the city of Ottawa over \$250,000 to establish a gateway for immigrants. We've got two programs at Algonquin College to help newcomers. We also have a very specific program out of Ottawa for 500 foreign-trained physicians to get work in Ontario. So there have been millions of dollars invested in Ottawa, because Ottawa is one of the designated immigrant gateways. We've made substantial investments there that were never made under the previous government before.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South—Weston): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. So many questions about the Liberal election slush fund have been left unanswered by this minister and his cabinet colleagues, questions that Ontarians have a right to have answered honestly. It seems that the Liberal government is incapable of answering questions, let alone providing honest answers. But we're going to give it another try. When will this minister do the right thing and resign for his mishandling of this scandal?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, as minister, we have made investments with partners that needed to be made and had to be made; partners like the Jamaican Canadian Association which does incredible work and has a long track record; partners like the Greek community of Toronto, which has been in existence for decades and decades—they're building a new centre; partners like the Centre for Information and Community Services, which services York region and northern Scarborough. We're proud to partner with CultureLink; with the Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines, which is in a building that was built in 1860. That's who we've invested in. We're giving them the resources to provide better services.

Mr. Ferreira: It's Groundhog Day here at the Legislature. I'm afraid if the minister sees his shadow, we won't get any answers for another six weeks. But we're going to try again. I'm going to read from a couple of the daily newspapers. Here's what they say about the minister's evasive answering techniques.

The Toronto Star: "The government responded by either changing the subject or impugning the motives of the questioners."

The Globe and Mail: "Yet rather than respond to this brewing scandal, Mr. McGuinty trotted out the transparent political trick of deflection."

Mr. Speaker, through you and on behalf of the people of Ontario, when will this minister take his chance to do it right, to answer this simple direct question: Did he do the honourable thing? Did he offer to resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, I have from day one been totally focused on helping make Ontario a better place, especially for many of our incredibly courageous immigrants and many of our volunteer organizations that have been working without help for years. I tried to do what I could; hopefully we're making it a better system.

But I would say the critical thing is that we must not forget those that we made the investments for, such as Thorncliffe neighbourhood services. I visited Thorncliffe neighbourhood services numerous times. The incredible volunteerism, the incredible dedication of everyone at Thorncliffe neighbourhood services, and every single member of the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre that now has a new centre—those are the organizations that have been driving my ministry, that make me do what I do, because they are very deserving. They need help and I'm proud to—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

NURSES

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, nurses are the heart of the health care system. They work long, hard hours in oftentimes stressful situations to provide Ontarians with the care they need. While we have made good progress on increasing the number of nurses in the system, nursing associations caution us about a projected nursing shortage in the future.

Minister, there is unbelievable growth happening in my riding of Thornhill and in the 905 area. With many young families moving into the area, they will need a strong health care system to meet their needs. But we cannot afford to allow young nurses to be swayed by the US or other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What are you doing to make this profession an attractive choice for young nursing students and keep them in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): There's way too much help going on here at the moment.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We're wasting time.

Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased, during Nursing Week, to have a question about nurses in the province of Ontario. I'm pleased to say to the honourable member—through you, Mr. Speaker, of course—who represents the great riding of Thornhill, that we recognize the growth that's occurring in his region. That's why there's a construction crane at York Central Hospital, that's why we're building a new regional cancer centre at South Lake, that's why we're dramatically expanding Markham Stouffville, and that is why we are going to build a new hospital in Vaughan. We are going to make sure that these new hospitals have good, new nursing grads. Through our new nursing graduate initiative, we're investing \$89 million to bridge nurses—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Niagara Centre. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Mr. Speaker, the disdain for the people of York region and nurses goes on in the form of the New Democratic Party, which refers to York region as underpopulated. But we know that nurses out there need bridging programs that support them in the transition from education to employment. At York Central Hospital, 42 new nursing grads already connected through our program to offer a guaranteed—

Interjections.

1550

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mario, here's your chance to soar with the eagles.

The Speaker: I'm not going to warn the member for Niagara Centre again.

Member for Thornhill?

Mr. Racco: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Thornhill are not impressed with the opposition.

Minister, this week is Nursing Week, and it is a good time to reflect on how far the profession has come in the last few years. The previous government might have a short—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm not going to warn the member for Renfrew again.

Member for Thornhill?

Mr. Racco: The previous government might have a short memory, but I remember all too well the thousands of nurses who were laid off during the 1990s. New nurses are an important component in strengthening the nursing profession, but our hospitals, long-term care homes and community providers are full of experienced nurses who want to work longer but require less physically demanding roles. We cannot forget the thousands of nurses who are the backbone of our health care system. To the minister: How have you addressed their needs to keep them on the job longer?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We're making tremendous progress in the province of Ontario to extend the careers of our nurses by giving them exciting opportunities, including helping to train those incoming new nursing grads that I just had the privilege of speaking about.

At York Central Hospital, 15 late-career nurses are benefiting from the flexibility of spending some of their time off the front line, helping to train the next generations of nurses, and we think that this has been important in helping to expand the life of those late-career nurses.

We've invested \$100 million of the people's money in 19,000 ceiling-mounted bed lifts to literally take the strain off the backs of nurses. Nursing, according to Doris Grinspun, "is on the road to recovery" after the seismic shift in the workplace caused by layoffs during the provincial funding cutbacks of the 1990s—actions perpetuated on health care by the two opposition parties in the province of Ontario.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship as well and has to do with the McGuinty Liberal slush fund. I think we have to attach the Premier's name to this because this wouldn't be happening without the concurrence and endorsement of the Premier of the province, which is shameful when you look at the positions that the now Premier took when he was Leader of the Opposition with respect to almost weekly demands for the resignations of ministers of past governments.

Minister, I have to ask you, through the Speaker: Given the standards that you had when you were sitting on this side of the House, the fact that we now know that over \$30 million of monies went to groups and organizations within this province without any application, without any follow-up in terms of approvals or audits, how do you justify positions you took when sitting on this side of the bench with your failure to resign today?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): As I said, the investments we've made with so many organizations that are doing incredible work—and I've named them over and over again—based on the principles of something I'd like the member to appreciate is that there are many needs in our diverse communities, incredible needs in our newcomer communities, in our volunteer communities, many needs in our poor neighbourhoods where the majority of the people living there, sad to say, are immigrants—no fault of their own, because they are trying desperately to work two or three jobs. In some cases, they're extremely frustrated because they say, "I have a degree, I have experience, and I'm still making minimum wage." Those are the investments we've made to try and give them the opportunity to learn English, get job training and make progress—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: I've known the minister for many years and I consider him to be an honourable member. It's difficult to sit here day after day and listen to him fail to respond to, I think, very legitimate questions. He's obviously having his strings pulled by the people in the corner office, by the Premier's people. This is not the Mike Colle all of us have known.

When we're looking at a scandal in terms of the significance of this, we know that Mr. McGuinty has no standards. We saw it with the Minister for Small Business and Entrepreneurship, the first individual found in breach of the Members' Integrity Act. He's still in office; he's still in cabinet. We saw it with Minister Caplan with the OLG scandal. He's still sitting there, smiling in his chair. Now we have a very honourable member—I know he's a very honourable member—who wants to do the right thing, and I ask him to stand up today and do the right thing. Either call in the Auditor General or defy that corner office and step down.

Hon. Mr. Colle: I do appreciate the great contribution that the member from Leeds–Grenville has made to this House, and I've always had great respect for him. I'd like him to appreciate the fact that I deeply believe in and have deep convictions about these investments and the organizations that desperately asked, sought and made their cases known for help from all governments—not just our government. They've asked the city. They've asked the federal government. That's who we tried to respond to with these investments. It was a cry that's been heard loud and clear across the province that I'm trying to address and have tried to address with these investments.

That's what I tell the honourable member. As I said, I have deep respect for his record, and I hope he has respect for what my conviction was in making these decisions.

The Speaker: New question.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Over the past couple of weeks, the Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario, the Somali Women's Association, the Vietnamese Women's Association, the Polish foundation of Canada and others from my riding have demanded to know why they were not advised of, or even considered for, the government's year-end slush fund, yet the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration refuses to answer any of their questions or, of course, our questions. We're all frustrated. We just ask a simple one, finally, one that maybe, just maybe, he might be able to answer, and that is whether or not this minister has submitted his resignation.

Hon. Mr. Colle: To again reaffirm that I have been totally committed and focused to do my job every day I've been here as minister—I will continue to make that commitment and focus, and I will not stop.

I've said to the member opposite, there are an incredible number of organizations doing great work in a variety of fields: the volunteer sector, seniors sector, newcomer sector. We appreciate that they all need some help. My ministry tries to help as many as possible. There are many more to help. That's why we've put up the registry now, so for the first time, we have a direct application online for—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Ms. DiNovo: It was the McGuinty Liberals that smeared me in the by-election of Parkdale–High Park and, through me, my family and my congregation, and then there was the OLG scandal and now there's the year-end slush fund.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Perth–Middlesex.

Member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: As I was saying, the smear campaign against me, my family, my congregation, the OLG scandal—

Interjections.

The Speaker: This is not helpful.

Ms. DiNovo: Shouting down women, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Government House leader. We'll wait. Order.

The Speaker: Member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: As I was saying, a smear campaign, slush funds, OLGC scandals—this is clearly a government that is completely ethically bankrupt. The minister did not advise all multicultural organizations of this year-end slush fund, and so I ask a very simple question again: When will this minister resign? Because he's clearly not fulfilling his mandate.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Our government and my ministry are very, very proud of the fact that after 20 years, where for a newcomer who came to Ontario we used to get \$800 and where a newcomer went to Quebec and they got up to \$3,800—we rectified that. We're proud of that record. We have a \$5,000 loan program for newcomers—we're proud of that. We have internship programs in the Ontario public service for newcomers—we're proud of that. We're proud of the investments we made in newcomer groups that were neglected for years and did not have any support. These are the organizations, big and small, that are getting help for the first time and getting attention. We think that's long overdue.

Is there much more work to do? Yes. That's why we now have a registry online so that we can help even more groups, hopefully into the future, because there is much need out there that still remains.

1600

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron—Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, supply management is critical for the riding of Huron—Bruce and for all consumers in Ontario who have access to guaranteed supplies of high-quality products at fair and stable prices. The agricultural community is concerned that supply management is at risk, based on the actions by the federal Conservative government, on the wheat board decision and the recent nomination of a candidate who will provide input into the provincial Conservative Party policy and who is against supply management.

Minister, what is the McGuinty government doing to ensure that supply management remains a vital part of Ontario's agricultural sector for years to come?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I very much appreciate the honourable member. She's very, very committed to her constituents and certainly to advocating for supply management. As part of her good work, she has moved this government to a motion that did come forward, I'm very happy to say, in December 2005, where the entire Legislature supported supply management. Subsequent to that, I also travelled to Hong Kong to represent this government at the world trade talks and to reaffirm our government's support. I just would like to read into the

record a letter that I received from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario where they indicate: "Please know, Minister, that the Chicken Farmers of Ontario deeply appreciate your ongoing support and your government's ongoing support for supply management. Your support for supply management played a pivotal role in ensuring that the sensitive products category remained a viable option for Canada's supply-managed industries." That is our commitment to supply management.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary. I'm sure the member will phrase this through the Speaker.

Mrs. Mitchell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Supply management is a vital component, and I can tell you that it drives the economy in Huron—Bruce. In order to understand the economic impact of supply management on just one riding, consider the following statistics for the riding of Huron—Bruce: 200 million litres of milk; 65 million kilograms of poultry; eggs, 2.1 million birds; turkeys, 6.85 million kilograms.

Supply management is absolutely vital to the economic livelihood of farmers in my riding. Under a Tory regime featuring their newest team member, who advocates for optional access to supply management sectors, the agricultural sector would be severely impacted. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What do you feel would be the economic impact to Ontario under such a system as proposed by the newest member from across the way?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: What I can say is that we know that this sector generates \$2.4 billion for the province of Ontario, which is close to 28% of all farm cash receipts. Roughly 50,000 jobs are connected to supply management in the province of Ontario. I share the honourable member's concern with respect to the colleague of the members opposite, Mr. Hillier, who has indicated that he believes marketing boards—he calls them welfare farmers, those who participate in marketing boards or supply management. He says that the supply-managed sector provides false security and safety for the industry, and that farmers are foolish to believe that the supply management sector will provide them with prosperity. I disagree with Mr. Hillier; our government disagrees. We remain committed to supply management in the province of Ontario, unlike Randy Hillier and John Tory.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I've also signed this.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario's lottery system for months, if not years;

"Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to 'spin the scandal' rather than fix the problems;

"Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to"—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member for Erie—Lincoln rose on the issue of the content of petitions and attacking individuals in the House personally within these petitions. I think there was a ruling at that time that we were going to have a situation where this no longer existed. Clearly, this is in the category that was complained about by the member for Erie—Lincoln and I ask you to rule on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I haven't heard the whole petition but it seems to me—it may be. I don't know.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

We'll move on. I will review the petition. It has been filed. I'll have a look at it later and rule tomorrow.

ENERGY CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN LOGO

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty government's new energy conservation campaign logo, Flick Off, is offensive to public standards of decency by its suggestive nature;

"Whereas this logo is vulgar, is an insult to all Ontarians and sends the wrong message about community standards to the children and youth of our province who are targets of this ad campaign;

"Whereas this logo and campaign only serve to make light of and ridicule the important issue of energy conservation in Ontario today;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and his environment minister to immediately withdraw this offensive ad campaign from the public domain and issue a formal apology to all Ontarians for wasting \$500,000 of Ontario taxpayers' dollars on this ill-conceived and offensive decision of the McGuinty government."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it to the table with Zachary.

1610

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident

care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds.”

I'll send this petition with page Zane.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Further to the House leader's comments, I'd like to ask one review to be done. I believe I brought a point of order about petitions in the past about the stamp that the table offers as a clearance to the petitions that have been ruled on. I think what has happened is that maybe this petition has been read once before and not ruled on, and if it doesn't have the stamp it implies that it's an approved petition.

I would suggest respectfully that I believe the process has been traditionally that all petitions are stamped and therefore would be then seen as approved by the table, which would then represent the Speaker's ruling, if a different Speaker were in the chair, about the petition.

So I offer that as, hopefully, a helpful comment on the petitions and the way they're passed in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I take the chief government whip's point. I would, though, advise that the petitions need to be stamped before they are presented here, but we are becoming more rigorous out of necessity with the language that is used in those petitions. So I would just caution members to ensure that the petitions don't offend any of the traditions of this House.

I would point out that this particular petition that the member for Oxford had placed had been ruled yesterday by the Deputy Speaker as something that should not be presented here again.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have another petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the proposed Long-Term Care Homes Act is extremely lengthy and complex and requires full and extensive parliamentary and public debate and committee hearings throughout the province; and

“Whereas the rigid, pervasive and detailed framework proposed is excessive and will stifle innovation and flexibility in the long-term-care sector; and

“Whereas the additional burden, red tape and punitive measures imposed by the proposed legislation will aggravate and exacerbate the chronic underfunding of the sector, to the detriment of residents of the homes; and

“Whereas the proposed legislation will have serious implications for the viability of the for-profit and not-for-profit, charitable and municipal long-term-care sectors;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We demand that the McGuinty government withdraw the proposed act, or remove the offending sections, and fulfill its commitment by a substantial increase in funding on a multi-year basis in the order of the promised \$6,000 per resident, per year.”

I have affixed my signature.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition here to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that reads:

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I'll sign the petition as well.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition regarding lab services at Muskoka Algonquin hospital.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

“Whereas MAHC has indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive \$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the impact of such decisions would negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie.”

I support this petition.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I do have petitions here. I've never had a petition stamped in this House yet, and I wonder what section it is that says we have to have our petitions stamped. If you could help me out with that, because I feel it is a member's right to put in petitions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): To the member: I'm advised that under the standing orders, MPPs are required to have their—take your seat.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat, please. It is in the standing orders that members are expected and required to have their petitions stamped before presentation.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have another petition, this one to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding. It reads:

“Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas studies indicate that overcrowded emergency rooms result in higher mortality rates; and

“Whereas growing demand and lack of availability of long-term-care beds place increased pressure on acute care beds; and

“Whereas the operating budget for MAHC must reflect the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and allocate more long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound.”

I support this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I see the minister here, so I know she'll be happy to know about these. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government enacted regulation 505/06 under the Day Nurseries Act; and

“Whereas regulation 505/06 came into force on January 1, 2007, changing the cost-sharing formula between the district of Parry Sound social services and administration board, the government of Ontario, and child care service users; and

“Whereas regulation 505/06 has resulted in disqualification of child care subsidies for working and single-parent families; and

“Whereas the regulation has resulted in fee increases of up to 96.5%; and

“Whereas adequate time should be provided to allow families time to make alternative arrangements and for non-profit daycare spaces to be developed in the communities served by the DSSAB;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as follows:

“That the McGuinty government repeal regulation 505/06 in the district of Parry Sound until such time as adequate non-profit child care spaces can be created to provide an alternative for working families.”

1620

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days....” I understand that on March 19, 2007, the member for Whitby–Ajax placed on the order paper a written question asking the Attorney General to “provide the amount of funding that will be available to the Human Rights Legal Support Centre, now that Bill 107 has received royal assent, and the number of staff that will be employed at the centre.”

By my count, this is 29 days now since the question was placed on the order paper, and no answer been given, to my understanding, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than enough time to answer the question and I ask you to direct the minister to table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm advised that the question that the member makes reference to, an order paper question asked by the member for Whitby–Ajax, has been answered today.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have a similar point of order and I have not been informed that that's been answered, so I will proceed.

I draw your attention to standing order 97(d), which states, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days....” On March 19, 2007, the member for Halton placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship to provide an itemized total of the costs of creating the new Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, including but not limited to specifics like printing costs for new letterhead and signage.

By my count, this is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than enough time to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to stop and table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: To the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: I'm advised that the member for Halton has received his interim response today to his order paper question.

Mr. Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states that, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days....” On March 19, 2007, the member from Halton placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to please provide the number of full-time, part-time and contract employees employed by the ministry, broken down for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. By my count, it's 29 sitting days since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, to my

understanding. I would like you to inform the House and inform the minister that I would like an answer today.

The Acting Speaker: It is my understanding that the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has a valid point of order, and I would remind the minister that the minister is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days, as the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has pointed out. The minister's response is now overdue, and I would ask that the minister give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm informed that all questions have already been tabled or will be tabled by the end of the sessional day today.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Sorry. May I correct that? The answers to all of the questions have either been tabled or will be tabled by 6 p.m. today.

Mr. Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don't know how I go about this maybe you can help me. I would like to know how the House leader of the governing party would know the questions I'm going to ask and that they're already going to be done by the end of the day. Maybe somebody can help me with this. It seems to me that he knows this already, and maybe he does. Then he could help me with my question about petitions, why we have to have them stamped by the Clerk's office, if he knows so much. I feel that that is taking away from my ability here to operate.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader has undertaken to commit to the House that all of the outstanding questions will be answered today by 6 p.m.

That deals with the point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING BUSINESS THROUGH A SIMPLER TAX SYSTEM ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 VISANT À RENFORCER LES ENTREPRISES GRÂCE À UN RÉGIME FISCAL PLUS SIMPLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2007 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 174, Loi édictant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts et apportant des modifications complémentaires et autres à diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I understand that when we last dealt with this matter the member for York South–Weston had the floor. I am pleased to recognize the member for York South–Weston.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And colleagues, for that ovation. When I started yesterday debating Bill 174, I referenced my weekend back in the riding of York South–Weston and I mentioned my visit on Saturday morning to the opening day festivities of the York Baseball Association, where the topic that the folks there were concerned about wasn't Bill 174. It was, in fact, the election slush fund of this government.

From the opening day festivities I proceeded to the 80th anniversary celebrations of Squibb's Stationers, a fine business that has been continuously operated now for 80 years. In fact, it is the longest such business in the village of Weston. You would think that there perhaps Bill 174 would have been top of mind to those proprietors and those customers celebrating the 80th anniversary with the owner, Suri Weinberg-Linsky, but alas, it was not. What I was being asked about was the slush fund, and what we witnessed here today was again non-answers to our questions. So, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move adjournment of the debate on Bill 174 this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1627 to 1657.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Ferreira has moved the adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table staff.

You may take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while the table staff counts you.

You may take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 33.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for York South–Weston has the floor.

Mr. Ferreira: I am pleased to rise again to continue my comments on Bill 174. As I was mentioning earlier, while at Squibb's Stationers on Saturday, I did have the opportunity to speak to the proprietors about tax reform that would have a real impact on their business, and that's around the issue of property taxes. We know that there is a serious need for reform of the property tax system in this province, and what we have gotten instead from this government is delay. They've said that they want us to wait another couple of years before they implement any type of much-needed reform.

I'm hoping, quite optimistically, that the results on October 10 will in fact lead to property tax reform in a more immediate time frame. I suspect that given what is happening here in this House in terms of the non-answers that we are getting to the questions posed by members of

the opposition on the slush fund, this is a government that is gasping for air and is quickly going to run out of it.

Mr. Speaker, as much as I would like to continue on Bill 174, given the lack of answers, I would like to move adjournment of this House this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Ferreira has moved the adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1700 to 1730.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Ferreira has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while being counted by the table staff.

Thank you. You may take your seats.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing while being counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 10; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for York South–Weston still has the floor.

Mr. Ferreira: I see that I have 12 minutes remaining. I would like to share that with my colleague from Toronto–Danforth, if that is permissible, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: At any point during your remarks, if you wish to indicate a willingness to share your time, you may do so.

Mr. Ferreira: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like at this point to share the remainder of my time with my colleague from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Speaker, as you and people in this House are well aware, we have gone through some very tumultuous times in the last few weeks revolving around practices on the part of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that are not acceptable. The practices have been pointed out as improper by members of this House. The minister refuses to answer our questions. The minister refuses to answer questions of the Queen's Park press gallery when pressed and, frankly, it's no surprise that the bells have been ringing in this House for an extended period of time.

We are supposed to be discussing Bill 174, the corporate tax harmonization bill. As you may well be aware, Bill 174 builds on a memorandum of agreement signed in October 2006 with the federal government in order to have the federal government administer corporate taxes, including provincial corporate taxes, in this province beginning in 2009.

This bill has been criticized by a number of people. One of the concerns with this bill is that this harmonization will lead to the potential for substantial reduction in revenue on the part of those of us here in Ontario, and that potential for loss of revenue, to my knowledge, has not been addressed by the minister and has not been addressed by the government. The Ontario Public Service

Employees Union suggests that the loss of revenue could be as great as \$1 billion. I don't know if it will be \$1 billion, if it will be more than \$1 billion or perhaps a little less. I do know that to make a change that puts at risk a flow of funds of that scope is an extraordinary step. Frankly, if the government is serious about the financial well-being of this province, if the government is serious about the environmental and economic well-being of this province, it should be bringing forward the data to show that in fact there is no risk to the income of the province of Ontario.

We went through all of the angst of the broken promise right at the beginning of the term of this government when Dalton McGuinty, who had signed a pledge on television not to raise taxes, raised them by, what, 2.6 billion? And yet now we're going through a corporate tax harmonization process that could lose a billion dollars in revenues. That's an extraordinary step for government to take. Think about what a billion dollars brings. A billion dollars used by the province would have a substantial impact on the download. I'm talking about a billion dollars a year. That would have a very substantial impact on the burden that's been dumped on the cities, towns and municipalities of this province who are struggling.

I know over a number of years, since 1997-98, that there's been obvious decay in the stock of public housing in this province. It's totally apparent. There are hundreds of millions of dollars worth of capital repairs that have to be done. If this money was kept in the budget, if this money was kept as revenue flowing into Ontario's coffers, those issues could be addressed. But if this province doesn't care about losing a billion dollars a year, let them speak out. They went through all the agony of breaking a promise and cranking up taxes in this province, and now they seem to have no difficulty, to be completely at ease taking steps that could lead to significant revenue loss.

When we see this kind of action on the part of the government, when we look at what's gone on in the past while, where a ministry, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, dispenses tens of millions of dollars, supposedly at year-end, with no application forms, no criteria and no evaluation, when we see a situation where a ministry whose annual budget is in the \$90-million range has \$10 million or \$15 million per year left unspent at the end of the year to rush out the door, you have to ask what sort of management is going on and, setting aside the question of management, what kind of political decision-making is going on to shift these funds into this particular ministry for them to be dispensed in the way that they've been dispensed.

I have to say that this whole activity on the part of the government has caused tremendous anger on the part of those of us in the opposition and on the part of many in the public as a whole. On that basis alone, Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate as a way of protesting the ongoing stonewalling on the part of the government.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1738 to 1808.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Tabuns has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the

motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing while you're being counted.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 6; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. However, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 p.m. this evening.

The House adjourned at 1809.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerk-at-the-Table / Greffier parlementaire: Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock Halton	Scott, Laurie (PC) Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)		Milloy, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Lanark-Carleton	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Leeds-Grenville	
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	London West / London-Ouest	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	London-Fanshawe	Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Markham	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Peterson, Tim (Ind.)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Craiton, Kim (L)
		Niagara Falls	

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Scarborough-Centre		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
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Scarborough Southwest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough Agincourt	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Scarborough-Rouge River	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe North			
Simcoe-Nord	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Catharines	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 8 May 2007

Mardi 8 mai 2007

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Clerk
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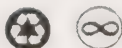
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 mai 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL SAFETY), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (DISCIPLINE PROGRESSIVE ET SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 30, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety / Projet de loi 212, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne le comportement, la discipline et la sécurité.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2007, I am now required to put the question.

On April 25, Ms. Wynne moved second reading of Bill 212, An Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1847 to 1857.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Chan, Michael
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Ferreira, Paul
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kormos, Peter
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
MacLeod, Lisa
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Norm
Mitchell, Carol
Murdoch, Bill

Orazietti, David
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Prue, Michael
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Runciman, Robert W.
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Tascona, Joseph N.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 44; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on general government.

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 218, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 7, 2007, I'm now required to put the question.

On May 1, Mrs. Bountrogianni moved second reading of Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1900 to 1910.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Chan, Michael
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
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Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Ferreira, Paul

Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Murdoch, Bill

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Tascona, Joseph N.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 35; the nays are 9.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 7, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1912.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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